journey

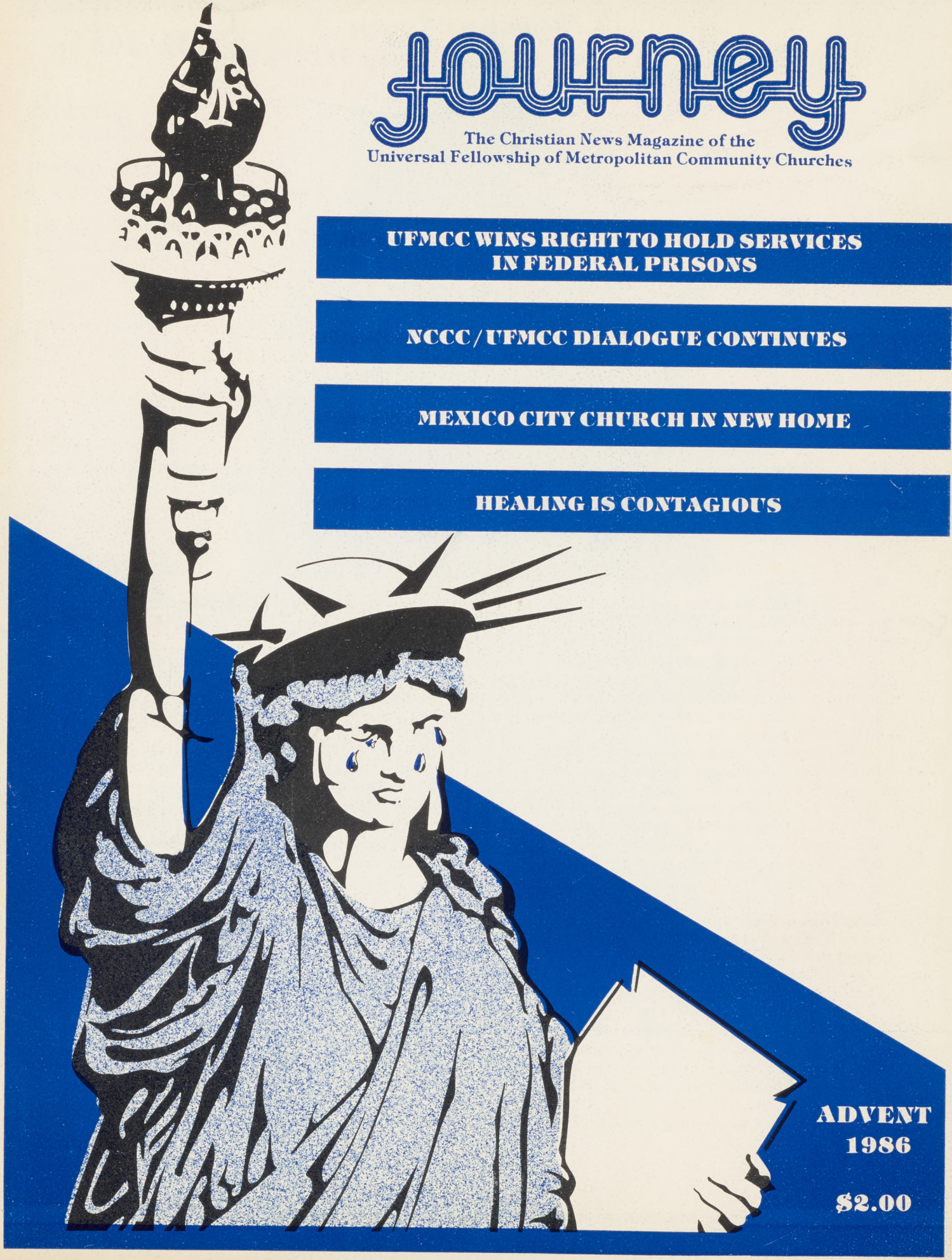
The Christian News Magazine of the
Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

UFMCC WINS RIGHT TO HOLD SERVICES IN FEDERAL PRISONS

NCCC / UFMCC DIALOGUE CONTINUES

MEXICO CITY CHURCH IN NEW HOME

HEALING IS CONTAGIOUS



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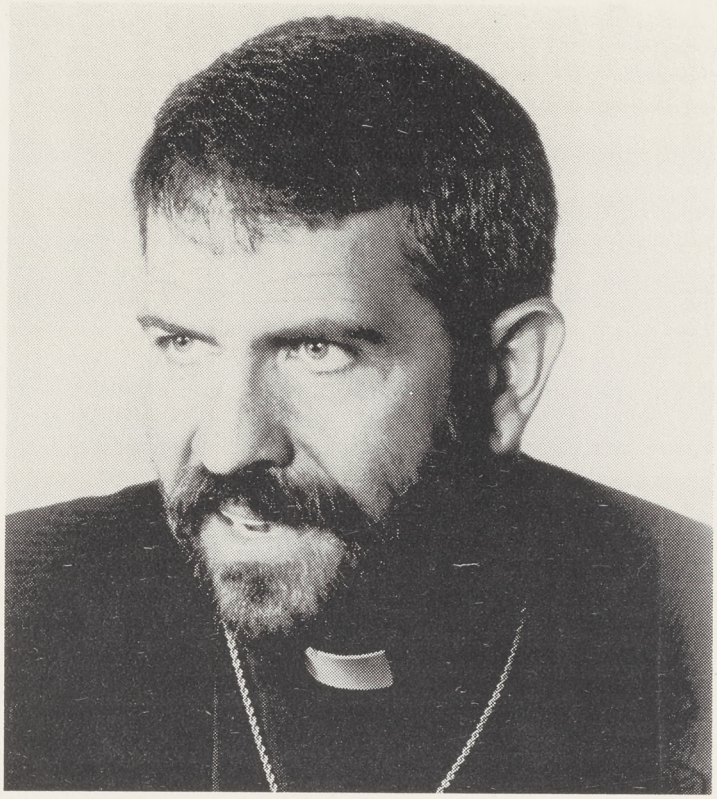
A Message from the Reverend Elder Troy D. Perry



On November 4th of this year California voters had the opportunity to vote for or against proposition 64, the so-called "AIDS Initiative" proposed by followers of the ultra-rightest Lyndon LaRouche. Mr. LaRouche's followers had been able to gather the signatures of some 690,000 voters to qualify the initiative for the ballot.

The pro-LaRouche group sent out about 1 million, 24 page, booklets to voters in California stating that "A vote for proposition 64 could save the life of someone in your family." LaRouche was quoted as saying, "Every leading medical institution in the United States and Western Europe knows that the deadly disease called AIDS is spread by casual contact." The pro-LaRouche group tried to use distorted facts and outright lies to sway the electorate to their point of view.

The minute this initiative was certified and placed on the ballot the members of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, especially in California, went into action. I became a part of the central committee for "No on 64 — Stop LaRouche," a coalition of gays, lesbians and our friends who saw the horrible damage that could be done to our community if this law was passed. The Reverend Elder Freda Smith chaired C.A.L.M. (Clergy Against Legislated Morality). She was able to organize our churches to get volunteers to work in the campaign as well as to register voters. The Reverend Elder Nancy Wilson concerned herself with the Inter-faith Coalition Against the LaRouche Initiative and was a part of the process to get the diverse religious community in California to speak out against the initiative.

For these last few months all of the members of the Board of Elders spread the alarm across America about the danger that would be imposed upon us if this proposition passed.

I want to let you know that prayer meetings were held, sermons were preached and God proved again, *"It's not by might, nor by power but by my spirit saith the God of hosts."*

WE WON! I am happy to announce that proposition 64 was defeated with 71% of the voters in the state of California voting against it. God has given us another victory.

In October of next year we have an opportunity to again take our grievances to Washington D.C. when another march on our Nation's Capitol will be held. The theme will be "Our God Who Gave Us Life Also Gave Us Liberty." It will be a two-pronged thrust at our government to get the money that is needed for AIDS research and find a cure for that dreaded disease, as well as again affirm that after the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision affirming the right of states to discriminate against us, that we will not sit idly by, but will continue to live as full, whole human beings in our society.

Please pray that this event will move the hearts of those in political power as God did many times as recorded in Scripture.

In Christ,

Reverend Elder Troy D. Perry

JOURNEY

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JOURNEY is a quarterly magazine of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC). The UFMCC is an international denomination of Christian churches with a special outreach to the Lesbian and Gay community.

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Editorial Office: 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 304, Los Angeles, CA 90029; Phone (213) 464-5100. Subscription rate $8.00 (U.S.) per year in the U.S., Canada, Mexico. $12 (U.S.) per year in other areas.

Published by Universal Fellowship Press. Printed in the U.S.A.

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IN THIS ISSUE....

Maybe it is the public hysteria created by AIDS or the political climate in our world or some strange combination of the two but there is something that tells us that we had better keep a more careful guard on our liberty these days. This issue of Journey contains a number of stories and features which reflect, in different ways, society and the church's response to this threat.

IN GOD'S IMAGE

As Presented at the

International Conference For Gay Christians
May 9-11, 1986

by Professor Halvor Moxnes, University of Oslo

To say that we are created in the image of God is the basis for the Christian view of humanity. It has great consequences for ideas about culture and society. The purpose of this address is to speak of humanity in the image of God from a gay perspective. First, I want to emphasize that as gay people we should consider our resources and think of ourselves as a "relevant minority."

Second, I'll give a few examples from the history of this concept "in the image of God" to show that the vital question is: "Who is the model for the image of God?"

Third, I'll indicate in what way Jesus creates a new humanity in the image of God.

And finally, I'll look at our friendships as a sign of the Holy Spirit, the creator of the new community.

First, this theme makes us reflect on where we are and who we are. I suggest that our recent history can be divided into three periods: that of an oppressed minority, that of a tolerated minority, and that of a relevant minority. The suppressed minority is characterized by legal and/or social oppression. The dominant attitude is that of the heterosexual society, which looks upon homosexuals as deviants or perversive persons. Among homosexuals this attitude is frequently internalized, resulting in a negative attitude to oneself. Society in its present as well as in its historical form is seen exclusively from a heterosexual perspective.

It was the struggle for equal rights against this oppression which led to the present situation of relative tolerance. This may be characterized as an attitude of acceptance, but most often on conditions set by heterosexual society. The present danger is to think that the gay struggle has been fought to a successful conclusion, and to be content with that.

This is a very simple model, and it can be supplemented by some of the observations by Phillipe Ardes in his ***Thoughts on the History of Homosexuality in Western Sexuality: Practice and Precept in Past and Present Times,*** (Sexualities Occidentales; Paris, 1982), Oxford, 1985, 62-75. He reflects on the cultural changes which have accompanied the greater acceptance of homosexuality. In some ways the homosexual man became a role model for the present "unisex" society. This is particularly so in the youth culture of today, which is the result of another significant cultural development. In the last couple of generations the period of adolescence has emerged as a distinctive entity, and very much as an idealized period. In many ways our youth culture is the most significant trendsetter of today's society, and one with substantial economic influence as well. And in this area fashions and lifestyles introduced by gay men have had great influence. Thus, it is an influential minority in setting its stamp on a culture. This is what I would name "A relevant minority."

A Relevant Minority

Thus, I think it is fair to say that it is not easy to classify the situation of homosexuals by universal labels such as "oppressed," "tolerated" or "relevant." We may be "oppressed" in some areas, "tolerated" in others, e.g. legally, and even "relevant" in others. This makes for an ambiguous situation. This was typical of the Third Reich. The ideals of masculinity and comradeship in Nazi ideology had strong homosexual overtones; at the same time, however, homosexuality was suppressed. Maybe in many Western societies today we might distinguish between the situation in different areas. It goes from oppressed to tolerated in most churches; in society at large, e.g. expressed by legal attitudes, there is a growing tendency towards tolerance. And in youth culture, homosexuals often can be considered a relevant minority.

As groups and as individuals we live more or less in all of these situations. Therefore it is very important how we think of ourselves. Do we live within a mental framework of "oppression" and begging for tolerance, or do we concentrate upon our resources? Are we happy to find a niche of relative tolerance in a heterosexual society, or do we think of ourselves as participating in a process of reshaping that society? If we do that we can become a "relevant minority."

This slogan, "a relevant minority," is borrowed from the World Student Christian Federation. The WSCF is a minority organization in Christian youthwork in many countries, but it still has great creative influence. The advantage with the perspective implied in this slogan, as I see it, is that it combines integration in society with a strong emphasis upon our own experience as members of a minority.

In 1976 we received an English Book from the SCM press: ***Toward a Theology of Gay Liberation.*** It was an excellent contribution, and still valid in many respects. However, *I urge us to go further from a theology of gay liberation to a theology of liberation for all people from a gay perspective.* We must see ourselves as partakers in the total human enterprise for liberation, not just a gay liberation. This is what I will attempt to outline full well knowing that we have not yet arrived at the place of being a relevant minority. Many of our sisters and brothers are still an oppressed minority, and we ourselves are often at best members of a tolerated minority. But we do need to venture into the future, to think of ourselves and to act as a relevant minority.

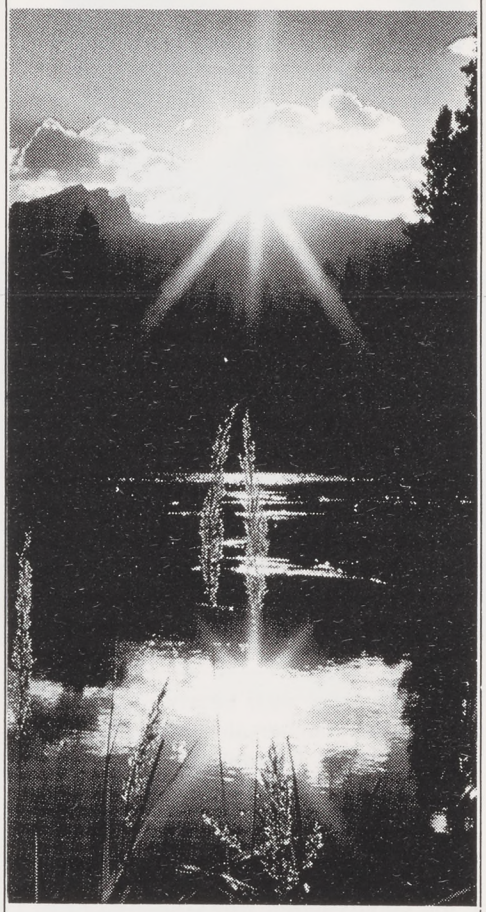
The starting point for our deliberations is "in God's image." That is a phrase from the creation account in Gen. 1:26: "In God's image" God created them, man and woman God

created them. The focus of Christian theology is this belief that humans were created in God's image, that there is a basic unity between God and humanity. The history of the world from a Christian perspective is that of a dramatic movement from creation "in the image of God," via the fall and loss of this image to its restitution in the body and life of Jesus Christ and the new integration of humanity into that image in the Christian Church. In a way it is this that is also the movement of the Creed: from God the Creator via Jesus the Savior and Recreator to the Holy Spirit, the Giver of new life, of community and fellowship. Thus, this is the movement that we shall try and follow.

I believe in God the Creator.

Gen. 1-2 is a creation narrative about the character and tasks of man and woman in the world, seen from the perspective of the Israelite faith in God. Thus it is very much male-oriented, with the woman in a "supporting role." *Man* is created by God, is God's co-worker and ruler over the world. Moreover, *man* is a cultural being. There is a very broad perspective here. But what is the history of this statement? It very early in Jewish interpretation became a statement of "man," i.e. the male person, being created in the image of God. *Man*, not woman, was created in the image of God! The woman was accused of being responsible for the fall, a means for sin which entered the world. The male characteristic consisted of intellect and reflection and the like, whereas emotions, sensuality, etc., characterized women. In Judaism as well as in the early Church and Gnositicism we therefore find that the ideal for women was "to become male." On the social level this corresponded to a patriarchal dominance. When the break with this theological tradition finally came in this century, it started not in theology, but in society. It was the women's rights movement that led to a new reading of biblical texts with an emphasis on other elements. For instance, Paul's statement in Galatians 3:28 became very important: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ." This does not imply that there are no differences between the sexes, but that these differences shall not result in social oppression or differences in status.

Thus, the movement for equal rights for women is a creation process. It is a matter of gaining the right to consider oneself as "the image of God." That means -- to have the right to participate in the process of creating society, to make it more human, to use the experiences of women as a model. And it is also very much a question of personal identity, of the possibility to consider oneself a valuable person.



This also holds true of black people in their stuggle for human rights. This is a struggle not only for economic, legal and social improvements, but also for the right to look upon oneself as a person of value. That has meant to fight the total cultural and ideological system determined by the whites. Bishop Tutu describes the effect of a white dominated education upon blacks in South Africa: it is the white community that defines what is good, beautiful and true. The effect of the Boer ideology was "to declare that blacks were human, but not quite as human as white people. The whites had a task imposed on them by God to evangelize and civilize these benighted natives, who were likely to remain as children needing the white man to bear the burden of being their guardian." In South Africa it is easy to see the effects of this ideology and politics: it is the dehumanization of society, not only for blacks, but for whites as well. When some people are refused human rights, all suffer. When some people consider themselves as "the image of God" more than others, the image of God is lost for all.

When some people consider themselves as "the image of God" more than others, the image of God is lost for all.

This is true also of "The image of God" and homosexuals. In the church the creation story is often interpreted in a very narrow sense, to exclude homosexuals. This has been the case in Norway recently, for instance in the recent report on the discussions on the Church and homosexuals. Many theologians realize that the few scattered statements about homosexual acts in the Bible cannot be used as a basis for a condemnation of homosexuality and gay relationships today. However, they take their recourse to this statement in the creation narrative, that humans are created in God's image, as male and female. Thus, according to this view, homosexuality is excluded. In this way the creation story is reduced to petty moralism. It is not any longer universal, but exclusive. The danger of excluding some people from the value of being created "in the image of God" is great indeed. And the consequences of saying that some people are less than the image of God, be they blacks, Jews or homosexuals, have been disasterous in our own century. Up against this we must put the struggle for everybody to be included in the image of God. The creation narrative must be reinstated as a story about men and women in the present world, in the struggle for human rights and for a human existence in our time.

Today creation also raises the question of sex roles, but from a different perspective. It is the question of women's rights, that breaks with the long tradition of suppression.

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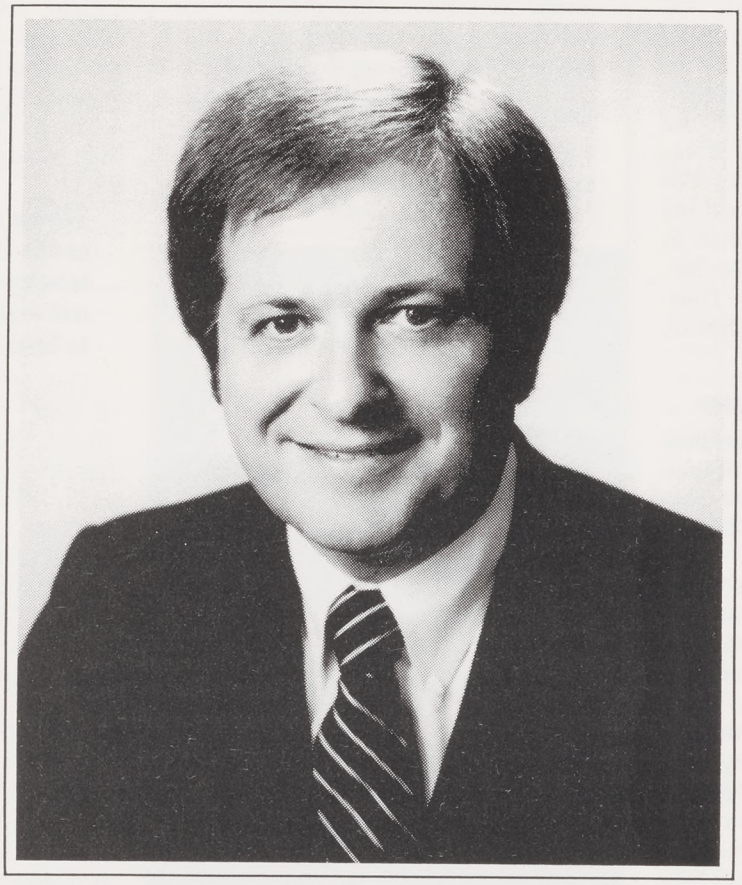
The Reverend Elder Donald Eastman
ASSUMES FULL-TIME DUTIES AT UFMCC EXECUTIVE OFFICES



The Reverend Elder Donald Eastman resigned his post as Pastor of MCC-Dallas on November 3 to assume duties in the UFMCC executive offices as a full-time Elder. The Reverend Eastman succeeds the Reverend Elder Nancy Wilson who earlier this year became Pastor of MCC-Los Angeles.

The Reverend Eastman, a former minister with the Assemblies of God, received his theological training at Central Bible College in Springfield, Missouri, where he graduated in 1966. Following graduation he served an Assembly of God congregation in Wisconsin as Pastor for six years.

In 1972 he assumed full-time secular responsibilities as an official of the American Lung Association of Iowa, a non-profit public health agency.

The Reverend Eastman resigned his ministerial credentials with the Assemblies of God in January 1975 and later that year became affiliated with the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. In May of 1975 he became pastor of the newly-formed MCC congregation in Des Moines, Iowa. During his two-year pastorate in Des Moines, the congregation was chartered as a UFMCC church.

Eastman became the Pastor of MCC-Dallas in 1978. Under his leadership the congregation grew to a membership of 500, acquired additional property and constructed a spacious new activity center. Active participation in service to the community resulted this year in Eastman being named recipient of the fourth annual "Texas Freedom Award." The award is presented each year upon nomination by the various gay/lesbian organizations in Texas and is given to an individual who represents an important role model to gay and lesbian persons.

The Reverend Elder Troy Perry, Founder and Moderator of the UFMCC, commented on Eastman's appointment, "Reverend Eastman's impressive record with the Dallas congregation demonstrates the kind of pastoral leadership vital to the future of our Fellowship. After a great deal of prayer and discussion, the other Elders and I felt he could bring strong leadership and management skills to our denominational headquarters. I am delighted that he has accepted this position and look forward to working with him."

Looking forward to his new responsibilities, Elder Eastman commented, "I hope to continue, as did Elder Nancy Wilson, providing the support to Troy, the Elders and our other leaders that will enable fulfillment of our world-wide mission. These are very exciting and very challenging times for our Fellowship. I feel privileged to have this opportunity."

MCC ALLOWED TO CONDUCT SERVICES IN FEDERAL PRISONS

(San Francisco, California) -- The Federal Government will allow Metropolitan Community Churches to conduct religious services in low security prisons according to an agreement approved by U.S. District Judge Charles Legge and signed for the Government by Assistant U.S. Attorney Mary Beth Donley.

There are six security classes within federal prisons. The ruling allows MCC's the same access as any other religious group to conduct services in level one and level two security prisons. At prisons with higher security level ratings a group of at least ten prisoners can petition a warden in writing to allow MCC to conduct group worship for them. If the warden refuses the group may pursue an administrative appeal.

In 1977 an inmate in Leavenworth, Kansas filed suit to overturn the governments refusal to allow MCC to hold services in the prison there. Since that time there has been a long series of legal actions and negotiations. Members of the negotiating committee representing MCC are John Wahl, a San Francisco attorney, the Reverend Terre Roderick, a pioneer in MCC institutional ministry, and the Reverend Elder James Sandmire, Pastor of Golden Gate MCC of San Francisco.

"The Bureau of Prisons does not feel (a church which identifies with homosexuals) is a threat to institutional security or violence at the lower-level security prisons," said Assistant U.S. Attorney Donley. "They continue to feel," she added, "that it could be a threat at the higher-level security prisons and they want to be able to look at that on a case-by-case basis."

The Reverend Elder Sandmire told Journey Magazine that he is not sure everyone understands the far-ranging implications of what has taken place with the decision. "In terms of the Federal Government this case has to be one of the most important things that has happened since the beginning of the gay liberation movement," said Sandmire. "For the first time the Attorney General of the United States, a member of the President's Cabinet; the top judicial official in this country, has stated that MCC is a valid church and must be treated by the Federal Government, in institutions over which the Attorney General presides, equally with all other denominations. I see this as opening all of the prisons to us, all federal institutions. I see this as a vitally important decision that makes it possible to pursue equal treatment in other areas of federal jurisdiction in the United States."

Sandmire praised the Reverend Roderick "whose example and reputation in institutional ministry led to deep respect for her presence and opinion in negotiations." He said that Attorney John Wahl selflessly donated his time and energies and "displayed exceptional persistence and brillance in arguing the case."

NCCC / UFMCC Dialogue Addresses Sexuality

by the Reverend Sandra Robinson

(Chicago, Ill.) -- As the relationship between the UFMCC and the National Council of Churches of Christ continues, over 20 people from MCC churches all over the country participated in the second Dialogue on Human Sexuality on November 7 and 8. Southwest, Mid-Atlantic, South Central and Great Lakes Districts were represented at the historic event.

The NCCC representatives to the planning commission had accepted our Reverend Sherre Boothman, UFMCC Dean of Samaritan Educational Ministries, as one of the two presenters during the dialogue. She and Dr. Daniel Maguire, professor of ethics at Marquette University, presented powerful and revealing comments on human sexuality. Dr. Maguire is author of The Moral Choice and Toward New American Justice.

The dialogue was held at the Essex Inn in Chicago and immediately followed the NCCC Governing Board meeting which was at the McCormick Center Hotel in Chicago.

The Chicago Resource Center, which funded the first dialogue in New Orleans, was represented at the meetings as they consider further funding for this and possibly other Ecumenical Witness and Ministry programs.

The Reverend Steve Pieters was present at the dialogue and Governing Board meetings. The Governing Board observed days of prayer and fasting Nov. 3-9 for people with AIDS and their families, friends and medical and spiritual supporters. The NCCC AIDS Task Force conducted a workshop during the week and had requested information from MCC's AIDS Vigil to help in arranging that service. (They also are requesting information on how to do funerals, memorials and ministry to people with AIDS and their families and friends. As a result of our vigil, mainline church pastors in need of this material are being referred to the nearest MCC. This is an historic occurence and one example of ecumenism at work between our churches.)

The Reverend Jennie Boyd Bull addressed the Governing Board concerning the results of our first dialogue. It was the first report on the dialogue process. More details of that report will be included in the next issue of Journey Magazine.

The third dialogue, in May of next year, will attempt to deal with the question, "What is Ecclesiology?"

MEXICO CITY'S NEW CHURCH BUILDING SITE OF HISPANIC AMERICA'S MINISTRY CONFERENCE

A new church building for ICM Reconciliacion (Mexico City) was dedicated in September during the Fifth Annual Hispanic Americas Ministry Conference. The new building was purchased in part with the help of special monies collected throughout UFMCC. Presiding at the building dedication was the Reverend Elder Freda Smith.

The Blessing of the facility took place during services which were a part of a conference attended by delegates and observers from Costa Rica, Mexico and the United States.

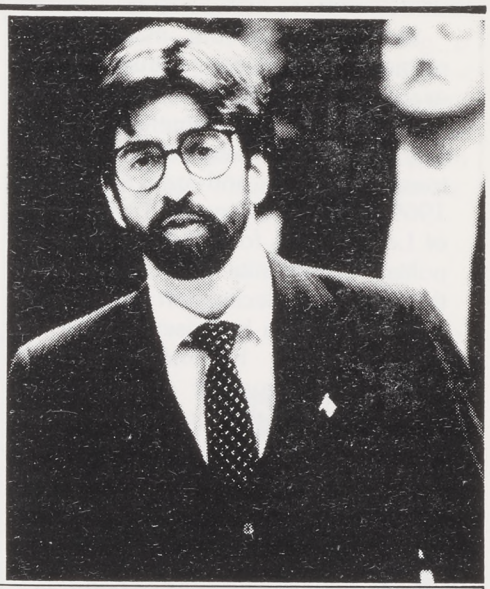
The Conference included uplifting and inspiring worship services, productive business meetings and informative workshops.

Business included the establishing of a Spanish translation committee to insure that UFMCC materials are translated correctly into Spanish. A Committee was formed to formalize the Student Clergy educational process in Mexico and Latin America.

Workshops focused on AIDS in the U.S. and Latin America.

The conference included the first Clergy Review Committee ever conducted in Mexico. It was chaired by the Reverend Joseph Gilbert (with the Reverend William Torres and the Reverend Bernardo David). The CRC recommended relicensures for the Reverend Felix Escamilla and the Reverend Horacio Flores.

SCONDRAS ON ANTI-GAY VIOLENCE



note: *Earlier this year the House Criminal Justice Subcommittee of the United States Congress heard testimony on anti-gay violence in the U.S. The following is a portion of a letter from Boston City Councilor David Scondras to that subcommittee. The letter is reprinted from the Bay Windows Newspaper and runs here by permission of that publication. The subcommittee is considering taking more testimony concerning anti-gay/lesbian violence during the next session of the Congress. Letters to the subcommittee may be addressed to Representative John Conyers, Chairman of the Criminal Justice Subcommittee, House Annex II, Washington, D.C. 20515*

Dear Representative Conyers,

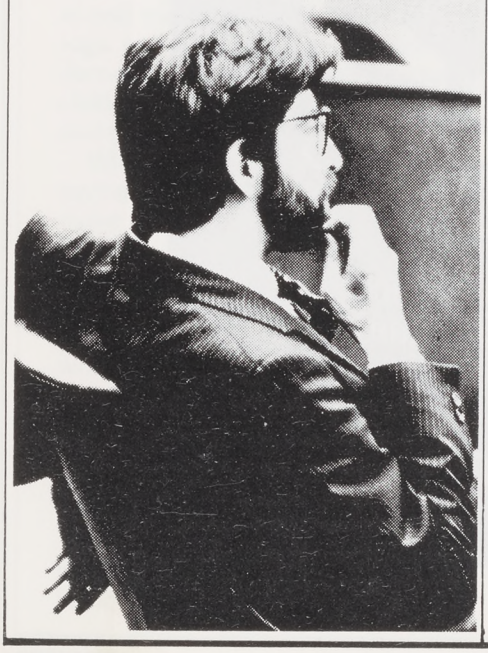
Kevin Berrill of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force informed me that you are accepting testimony concerning anti-gay violence.

Unfortunately, anti-gay violence is all too timely a topic here in Boston. Attacks, both verbal and physical, definitely seem to be on the increase. This summer we have seen a number of murders and brutal assaults against gay men and transsexuals. While such violence has always been with us, I believe the recent increase could be related to AIDS hysteria and the Supreme Court's decision to allow gay sex to be criminalized.

I routinely hear from friends and constituents of harassment in the workplace, much of it regarding AIDS. My office recently handled a case in which a young man was being threatened with eviction unless he submitted to an HTLV-III test. This man knew enough to protect his rights against this sort of illegal practice, but I fear many others are being harassed and intimidated out of housing or jobs by similar tactics.

Similarly, verbal taunts and threats directed at men perceived to be gay are increasing. A gay candidate for State Senate had calls to his office saying, "I hope you all die of AIDS," and was warned anonymously that he should leave events in a different car from the one he arrived in (implicitly threatening a car bombing).

But the most frightening phenomenon has been the series of gay men and transsexuals murdered and viciously attacked. One dedicated volunteer on my last campaign was beaten by a gang of youths in an outdoor cruising area last month. He spent two weeks in intensive care, still cannot walk or speak (his jaw was broken in several places), and has lost one eye. Others have been stabbed, mutilated, and apparently murdered because they are gay. At least one transsexual was found drowned in the Charles River six weeks ago. Authorities seem willing to have the death be considered suicide but word on the street was that it was clearly a homicide.



Again and again I hear of people not reporting violence, or doing so inaccurately so as to disguise the nature of the attack, not only to avoid job, housing, or family difficulties, but also because they are afraid of the police response.

I have three suggestions on ways to combat anti-gay violence. First, laws branding gay/lesbian people, transsexuals, or people with AIDS second-class citizens must be abolished and full civil rights protections enacted. Justice cannot be realized while social apartheid is tolerated or encouraged.

Second, police departments and criminal justice agencies must conduct aggressive affirmative action outreach efforts to insure that openly gay and lesbian people are hired. I am convinced that if we could have openly gay and lesbian officers patrolling heavily gay and lesbian areas of the city we could go far in establishing the trust and community cooperation key to crime prevention.

And third, violence against gay and lesbian people should be vigorously prosecuted as a violation of those people's civil rights. When we tolerate violence against a person because of race or sex or sexual preference we invite violence against an entire class of people. When a gay man is knifed because he is gay, or a lesbian raped because she is a lesbian, we need to recognize that the attack is not simply directed against the individual.

Thank you for your concern and work around anti-gay violence. The groups and individuals to whom I have sent copies of this letter might be of use to the committee; if you would like more information about any of them, or if I can be of further help, please feel free to contact me.

David Scondras
Boston City Councilor
Boston, MA

A BOOK REVIEW by Tom Doyal

EMBRACING THE EXILE:
Healing Journeys of Gay Christians

Embracing the Exile: Healing Journeys of Gay Christians by John E. Fortunato. The Seabury Press. (distributed by Harper & Row) Minneapolis, Minnesota. 1982. 137 pages. $7.95 in paperback, available at your local bookseller of order by mail from Liberty Books, PO Box 50421, Austin, Texas 78763. Please add one dollar for postage and handling and $.49 for Texas sales tax.

Slowly, slowly the mainstream religious institutions conduct a re-examination of the ancient church tradition of harsh judgments, hatred and, in many instances, violence toward lesbians and gay men. In 1969 when the Reverend Troy Perry of Los Angeles founded the Metropolitan Community Church with the then shocking declaration that it was possible to be a homosexual ***and*** a child of God, his message was greeted by a roar of outrage that culminated in the burning of his church. Twice!

Somewhat less heat attends the ongoing inquiry, but the bigots continue to snarl and homosexual Christians weary of explaining themselves to the heterosexist majority. In ***Embracing the Exile*** author John E. Fortunato has done all Christians a great service. As a gay Christian who counsels the spiritually and psychologically troubled, he has a special perspective into the great price exacted from both gays and straights by the bigotry toward homosexuals. He observes that this particular bigotry is so widely practiced and accepted that most people are unable to identify the virulent sentiments as bigotry at all.

Fortunato deals at some length with the notion that prejudice has, in effect, made the lesbian and gay man an exile in the culture; that oppression resulting from the prejudice produces an alienation so pervasive and constant that it becomes invisible even to its victims.

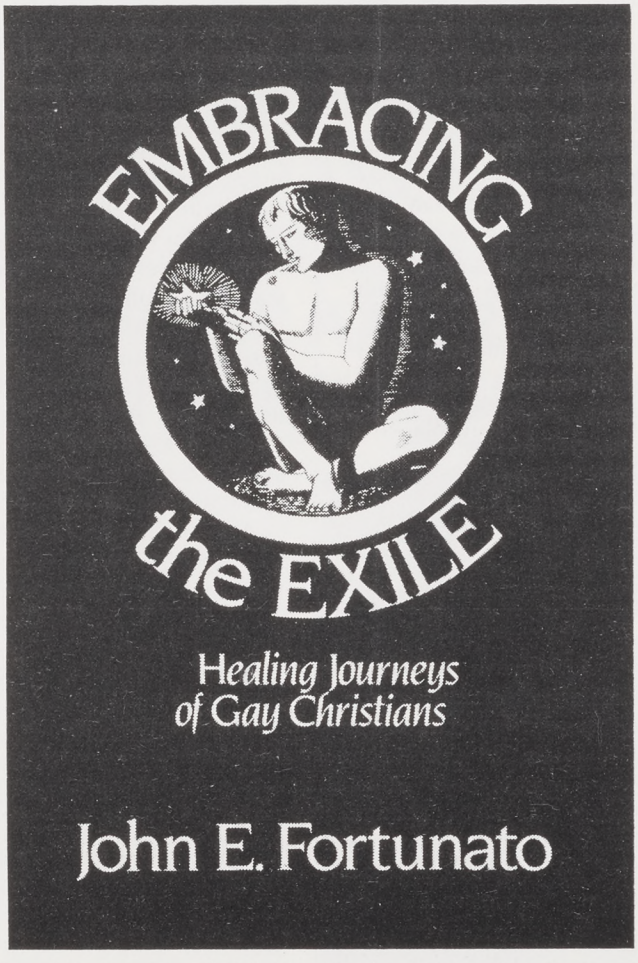
The bottom line is, of course, that gay people just don't have a choice. Oppression is simply what gay people face when they are authentic.

He goes on to discuss the best response to such oppression. He explores the options of avoiding oppression, fighting it and suffering through it. Each of these possibilities is illustrated with examples from his own life as well as from the lives of many of the people he has counseled.

The tragic stories recited are likely to inflame the reader's sensibilities, but the personal triumphs over those tragedies are inspirational and point toward spiritual growth. While Fortunato does not suggest passively accepting injustice and mistreatment, he does say that a willingness to acknowledge the reality of the oppressive exile can allow a thoughtful person to live through the pain and arrive at a new and calmer place that can empower the former victim.

He is emphatic that the lives most people, gay and straight, lead are based upon a myth of personal control over all of life's circumstances. For most gay people the myth crumbles in the face of inexorable oppression. The unending onslaught of fag jokes, family dssapproval and employment discrimination are inescapable. (Straight people, says Fortunato, must slam against their own particular tough realities in order to abandon the myth.) Fortunato makes no secret that his recommended path leads toward God and the love and acceptance of God.

The author calls for an embracing of the exile gay people have experienced as the first step in a journey toward healing and love. The book is a careful, Christian examination of homosexual oppression and a call for love and justice. Fortunato sets out clear signposts for a journey toward wholeness despite the tough, unloving responses that a hardened, increasingly chaotic world throws at us. His is a message of hope.



Tom Doyal is owner of Liberty Books booksellers and publishing company in Austin, Texas.

Editor's note: The following is excerpted from a tape of a workshop: A History of Lesbians and Gays in the Faith Community by the Reverend Sherre Boothman, Dean of Samaritan Educational Ministries.

THE SAME STRUGGLE

There is a temptation, as we struggle against the injustice in our world, to isolate our struggle and to believe that it has no connection with the struggle of our sister or brother. They may very well be experiencing injustice but we perceive that as being in another form and having no relationship to our own experience. What, for example, does the struggle of women have in common with the experiences of a gay male? I believe that they have plenty in common. The face of oppression may differ but the stuff of which it is made is the same. The oppression of women and of gay males had, in fact, so much in common in its history the interrelationship of the two can not be ignored if we are to break the oppression.

St. Augustine of Hippo expressed the predominate attitude of his time when he said that homosexuality was bad because it was, "a man using his body as that of a woman." He added that, "the body of man is as superior to that of a woman as the soul is to the body." *[1]* What is very blatantly being said in the Christian tradition, and I argue that it comes from Roman Stoicism, is that man is superior to woman. The belief is that just the male body is superior. That is definitely a reflection of the Greeks. Augustine, with male superiority in mind, expresses his horror for a man using his body as that of a woman. Augustine offered to us a hierachical view of creation. The devine, which is reason, is on top. A man, who is capable of reason is on top. Women, who are perceived as very emotional and may in their passions let their logic and reason slip, are placed underneath men. Then in this structure, children come underneath women and then the animals and plants, etc.

What Augustine very simply was saying to us was that for a man to make love to another man is to use his body as that of a woman voluntarily lowering himself to second-class citizenship therefore moving away from God. If a man acts like a woman, and woman is farther away than man from God, then a man is moving away from God and that is sin. Now that is why homosexuality was considered sin, because it was a man acting like a woman.

Now I offer to you — If it is okay to be a woman then what is wrong with being a gay man? Nothing, that is precisely my point. If it is good and a righteous and a God-given thing to be a woman, to be of the divine feminine, that changes things. It then becomes a good and righteous thing to be a gay man. In that case if you are a man, even if you are acting like a woman, so what? When women are thought of as good and righteous it is no longer thought of as moving away from God for a man to "act like a woman."

Have you ever noticed that we don't get nearly so upset when women dress in men's clothes as we do when men dress in women's clothes? Notice the change in reaction. It has always been that way. Society has never perceived of lesbians as being as "bad" as gay men because lesbians were women who were trying to act like men, "poor darlings." "They just don't have what it takes," would be the societal reaction, "at least they are trying; at least they acknowledge that it is better to be like a man than like a woman." The reaction to men dressed in women's clothes would be much different, "How dare they."

The source of our oppression is the oppression of women. Those of us who stand and fight and oppose sexist attitudes are fighting for ourselves if we are gay or lesbian. If you are a gay man your freedom is tied very much to the freedom of women. If you think that you are going to get out of the sewer of oppression before women do you are fooling yourself. You are underneath women on the hierachical system that society has created. The only way that you are going to get out of that gutter is to lift everyone else up in front of you.

1. Augustine, Contra Mendacium 7.10 (PL. 40:496) as quoted by John Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill., 1980) p. 157.

Liberty of spirit, that is to say, potency of intellect, is measured by the capacity to dissociate ideas traditionally inseparable.

-Jose Ortega Y Gasset: La Rebelion de las masas

JUDGE THROWS OUT SUIT AGAINST IMMIGRATION SERVICE

by James A. Gittings, Religious News Service

PHOENIX, Ariz. (RNS) -- A U.S. district judge threw out of court Oct. 14 a suit brought by churches charging that the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service violated their First, Fourth and Fifth Amendment rights by sending undercover agents into church services and prayer meetings.

Lawyers for the four congregations and two Protestant denominations that brought the action immediately said they would appeal the ruling.

Alzona Evangelical Lutheran Church, Camelback United Presbyterian Church and Sunrise United Presbyterian Church, all of Phoenix, filed the suit Jan. 13 in concert with Southside Presbyterian Church of Tucson and two national denominational bodies, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the American Lutheran Church.

The churches alleged that the INS and four of its officers -- Mark Reed, Robert Scott Coffin, John L. Nixon and James Rayburn -- sent convicted felons Jesus M. Cruz and Solomon Graham, also defendants, into church services, prayer meetings and processions to gather information in connection with an investigation of the church-led sanctuary movement. The suit alleged that the undercover investigators, who were wired during the church services and recorded all proceedings, acted without warrant, without probable cause and without a compelling reason for their actions.

In addition, the suit charged, explicit governmental guidelines were not followed in mounting the surveillance operation, and a provision requiring use of the "least intrusive" means of fact-gathering was ignored.

Judge Charles L. Hardy was terse in his dismissal of the plaintiffs' charges. "Although I don't approve of the government snooping in churches," he said, "I am prepared to give summary judgment in favor of the defendants. The plaintiff churches have no standing to raise the issue of First Amendment freedom of religion since religious guarantees apply to individuals. Also, the concept of sovereign immunity (of the government) applies here."

Churches can't expect privacy

Judge Hardy also turned down the charge that a Fourth Amendment violation had occurred. He stated that people participating in church services "have no legitimate expectation of privacy," and added that he "rejects the assertion of plaintiffs that injunctive relief is properly to be sought in this case."

The judge dismissed the Fifth Amendment charge without comment.

After the trial, attorney Peter Baird, representing the churches, spoke of his "respect for Judge Hardy" but insisted that "on this case, he is in error." Mr. Baird said he would appeal the case and that he expected it to go eventually to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Mr. Baird was especially critical of the judge's citation of sovereign immunity of the government. "That's astonishing," he said. "If sustained, we are back in the days of the old British kings."

The Reverend Hugh Gerald Roseberry, pastor of Camelback Presbyterian Church, summed up the plaintiffs' disappointment. "A large chunk of American freedom may be lost if this decision stands," he said. "The investigators came into our church and pretended to be what they were not, worshipers. They recorded our services and took down license plate numbers in our parking lot. By the government's own admission, it knew there was nothing illegal in the service. They knew that, and still they went forward."

"I am deeply distressed that the court cannot seem to understand what a church is," Mr. Roseberry added. "It sees the church as an aggregation of individuals rather than as a unity in faith. Hence the judge can say that a local church has no standing and cannot bring suit against the government. This leaves the local church defenseless against the government's intrusion and surveillance. I hope that in the appellate process a higher court will recognize that a heritage of religious freedom is endangered when government enters into worship services, Bible studies and mission planning sessions."

Continued on Page 12

Continued from Page 11

Government says no real damage done

Mary P. Mitchell, trial attorney for the Civil Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, insisted in court that church services are "open public meetings," that investigators "of course" may enter to investigate possible illegal activity without violating the First and Fourth Amendments. She asserted that the churches could not demonstrate that any real damage had been caused by the government's actions. The undercover people were engaged in "passive collection of data," she said, and "the facts in this case do not rise to the level of search and seizure."

Ms. Mitchell also stated that "the proof of the compelling necessity of this investigation can be seen in the conviction of eight of 11 defendants in Tucson," referring to the sanctuary trials last summer in which the Reverend John Fife and seven coworkers were convicted of immigration law violations. "These churches are the breeding ground of the sanctuary movement," the government attorney told the court. "And if sanctuary had no unlawful aspect, there would not have been an investigation."

Mr. Baird, in his presentation, attacked the government's assertion that damages arising out of the surveillance were "merely abstract, subjective or speculative." He declared that "the heart of religion is abstract, subjective or speculative. And the First Amendment protects free exercise of such religious abstractions as faith, love and trust."

Later, outside the court, Mr. Baird asked, "Can anyone say that trust isn't damaged when you've got spies listening to your prayers?"

BEYOND ACCEPTANCE. . .A Guide for Parents with Gay Children

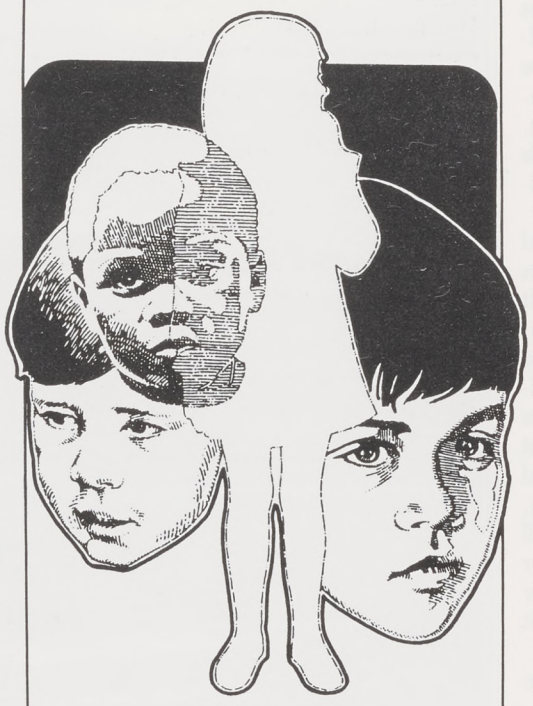
by Darrell Turner, Religious News Service Associate Editor

NEW YORK (RNS) -- Religious commitments are often sharply challenged when parents learn that one of their children is homosexual. But the results don't have to be negative, according to Marian and Arthur Wirth, a St. Louis couple who learned of their son's homosexuality 12 years ago.

The Wirths are co-founders of the St. Louis branch of Parents FLAG (Friends of Lesbians and Gays). Through their contacts with other couples and gay children, they have written a book titled "Beyond Acceptance (Prentice Hall, $16.95), intended both as an educational and supportive resource for such families.

In their book, the Wirths note that "theologians are now considering the scientific evidence that homosexuality is simply a natural condition for some people in all cultures. More and more of them are maintaining that the religious view of gayness should not be limited by outdated attitudes. A more generous spirit applies the universal biblical messages of loving your neighbor and being fair and nonjudgmental to all persons -- gay as well as heterosexual."

While acknowledging that acceptance of homosexuality is still not the norm in most religious groups, the Wirths comment that "homosexuality is not the only interpersonal issue that has been seriously rethought in recent times. New Testament attitudes towards slavery and women are cases in point."



The Wirths, who are Unitarians, said in an interview that some of their first encounters with other gay people and their parents came at meetings of gay religious caucuses like the Roman Catholic Dignity group and the Episcopal Integrity organization. "Almost every denomination, except maybe the extreme right, has a gay support group," Mrs. Wirth said. At the same time, she related, she and her husband "didn't have much luck" in trying to get clergy to attend meetings of the Parents FLAG group.

Mr. Wirth said that in talking with the 23 couples whose experiences are related in the book, he and his wife found that it was "typical that they did not get support or help that they were looking for from their religious leaders."

Asked about the assertion of some religious leaders that people should "hate the sin but love the sinner" in dealing with homosexuality, Mr. Wirth asked what such an attitude means in practice. "That could be a very interesting question to explore theologically," he suggested.

"We have come to accept homosexuality as a valid way to live if it is lived responsibly," Mrs. Wirth said. "There are gays who live irresponsibly, and they give all gays a bad name. There are heterosexuals who live irresponsibly, but we don't judge all heterosexuals by that group."

In a chapter on changes in attitudes, the book quotes one parent who said, "My religion means even more to me now, and presents no conflict. I realized the real message of all religions is to love, not judge, those who are different from me."

Asked if the book is suggesting that that is, or should be, a universal attitude among parents of gays, Mr. Wirth said, "We're not necessarily saying that everyone should have the same attitude on homosexuality. Not all people operate from the same premises, the same religious tradition."

HEALING I
CONT

A few weeks ago I had occasion to enter a hospital room where posted on the door was a sign warning persons that the patient inside had a contagious respiratory disease. It was a very unusual sign. It said that all persons were required to wear masks while in the room, "except those persons who were not susceptible to disease."

Now, that is a rather challenging sign for a Minister of the Gospel. "What in the world could the hospital mean," I thought, "by a sign like that?" I wondered, if to fit that unusual category of being not "susceptible to disease" you had to be terribly healthy or terribly holy or both. Apparently, I did not look like I fit either category, because a nurse read me the riot act for not wearing a mask.

Isn't it interesting how our society places such emphasis on the fact that we can catch bad things? Diseases are contagious. It is my understanding that we catch disease through the transfer of little microscopic somethings. We take certain precautions, and we are pretty much aware of the possibilities of catching certain illnesses.

I believe, too, that emotional illness is contagious. There is stronger proof all the time that abused children have a real possibility of becoming child abusers. The evil that is worked on us in our childhood has a tendency to leave emotional scars that sometimes last for the rest of our lives. Emotional illness is also contagious for adults. Some persons are so emotionally ill that if you have exposure to them for great lengths of time you had better take certain precautions or you might start to catch their illness.

There are also persons who are spiritually sick. They are so entangled in a web of deception and evil that if you are around them for too long you can start to feel the effects of their sickness. You can become entangled in the web and overcome by the contagion of their spiritual illness.

This whole business of catching illness carries with it a real stigma in our society. There is a feeling that illness signifies we are "in the wrong place at the wrong time" or "doing something that you shouldn't have" or "the victim of an unfortunate twist of fate." There are all sorts of superstitions in primitive cultures attached to sickness. I am not so sure that those superstitions are limited only to primitive cultures. I think that we, in our society, persist in the strange belief that to be healthy is to be virtuous. There is considerable self-righteousness expressed by those who jog, for example.

Somehow, in the back of our minds, there persists a belief that to be well is righteous and to be sick is unrighteous. How strange that we hold to this belief at the same time that we believe we "catch" illness.

I find it particularly interesting that we never think in terms of wellness being contagious. It is so foreign to us. We tend to find it easier to believe we could be walking along and catch something bad than we could catch something good.

Let's explore this business of wellness being contagious. As I understand it, sickness comes from little microscopic things that get into our bodies and make them act a certain way. So, what happens? Say, I have a slight infection. I go to the doctor and she/he gives me little capsules which contain little microscopic things which I put into my body. Those things make my body act in a certain way and I get well. What is the difference? I caught wellness at the doctor's office!

Suppose I am traveling in an area where there are diseases to which I may be vulnerable. If there are vaccines for those diseases I can get something introduced into my body which will cause me to remain well. I have caught wellness! If you can say that a person catches disease, then I think, very similarly, you can say a person has caught wellness.

Of course, our society is much more concerned and preoccupied with the fear of spreading or catching illness than with the celebration of spreading or catching wellness. This whole matter is so out of balance that we don't even give wellness the credit for contagion that it deserves.

This brings us to the point that *emotional* wellness is contagious. All of us who are in ministry hear horror

G IS NTAGIOUS

by the Reverend David Day

stories about persons' childhoods. I am convinced that almost all of us have a story. Somewhere, somehow, either in childhood or early adulthood, parents, friends, or lovers did us in. Oh, how we suffer so. Some of us seem to let our stories ruin our lives and others seem to plough right on through life in spite of the bitter past. There is something, however, that I almost never hear in spiritual counseling sessions. I almost never hear about the persons who shared wellness with us along the way.

Think of a session in which someone stops in the middle of their bitter story and says, "Gosh, my parents tried to share what measure of wellness they had with me; for example, I remember when...." We rarely hear things like, "I remember when my sister would sit for hours and hold me and go through book after book reading bedtime stories".

I believe that all of us have points of distress in our personal lives and have personalities put there by someone who let their sickness rub off on us along the way. I also believe that all of us have access to a great degree of wellness already in place because throughout our lives there were persons who were trying, in their own awkward way, to pass along to us all of the wellness that they could muster. Those persons may have been parents or friends or relatives or teachers or lovers or ministers or perfect strangers.

Isn't it sad that we live in a world in which we recognize the small possibility of catching an infection when someone around us sneezes, much more quickly, than we recognize the great capacity for spiritual, emotional and physical healing that we catch from a hug.

I tell you healing is contagious! I have known people in my life who were walking epidemics of it. You couldn't get near them without catching some of it.

I warn you now that there are people in our churches who are highly contagious when it comes to healing and wellness. Jesus still is contagious! Mark 5 tells the story of a woman who just touched the hem of his garment and was healed. If that is not a contagion of wellness I don't know what is.

I think we are beginning to see a greater acknowledgment of the link between medicine and psychology and spirituality. I believe that we are discovering more of the great links that exist between mind, soul, and body. More psychologists are exploring the business of spirituality. Ministers are becoming more aware of the place of psychology, and doctors are recognizing the far-ranging psychological and spiritual implications of those things that are needed for healing to take place.

It is time that we woke up and recognized the effects that we have on each other. I know that dispair and loneliness and rage will kill more homosexuals this year than AIDS will ever have the capacity to kill.

When a person has a highly contagious disease they have a responsibility to keep from spreading it to other persons. With certain diseases which are spread by airbourne methods the law can be very strict in providing that the spread of disease be prevented.

Unfortunately there is no law requiring that persons who are well to spread it around. Or is there? Maybe there is the law of the New Testament.

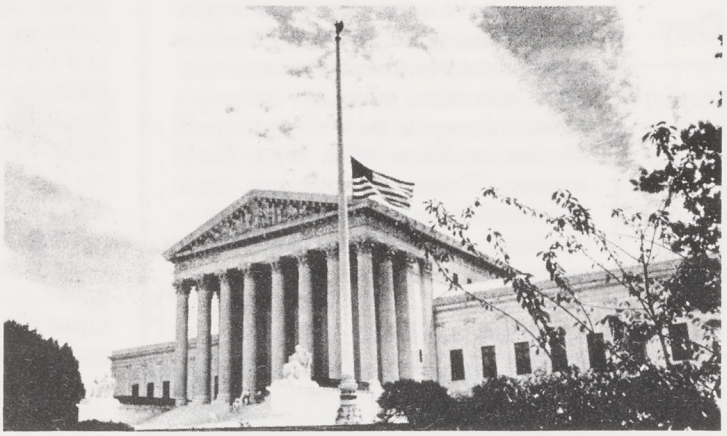
The world doesn't like that law. If you are too well you might infect too many people. Jesus was too well. He was infecting too many people with wellness and it was threatening the sick society. So, they crucified him.

Paul was too well and infecting too many people. So, they arrested him. In our own time, Martin Luther King was too well for a sick society. He was spreading human dignity like an epidemic. So, somebody shot him.

Thank God those efforts have been unsuccessful! It has been so since before the earth was made. There is no vaccination that can stop the spread of the love of God. Every attempt to stamp it out has only spread it more.

Love is contagious!
Dignity is contagious!
Freedom is contagious!
Wholeness is contagious!
Healing is contagious!
SPREAD IT AROUND!

Editor's note: *Most of us have heard about the Supreme Court ruling in the Georgia Sodomy Case. Some may not have seen just how the majority underscored the prejudice that has existed against homosexual persons. Particularly Chief Justice Burger felt so strongly on this issue as to write his own separate opinion. As a point of information we include a copy of his opinion in this issue of Journey.*



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USED BY PERMISSION OF THE WASHINGTON BLADE

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

No. 85-140

MICHAEL J. BOWERS, ATTORNEY GENERAL OF GEORGIA, PETITIONER *v.* MICHAEL HARDWICK, AND JOHN AND MARY DOE

ON WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE ELEVENTH CIRCUIT

[June 30, 1986]

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER, concurring.

I join the Court's opinion, but I write separately to underscore my view that in constitutional terms there is no such thing as a fundamental right to commit homosexual sodomy.

As the Court notes, *ante* at 5, the proscriptions against sodomy have very "ancient roots." Decisions of individuals relating to homosexual conduct have been subject to state intervention throughout the history of Western Civilization. Condemnation of those practices is firmly rooted in Judeao-Christian moral and ethical standards. Homosexual sodomy was a capital crime under Roman law. See Code Theod. 9.7.6; Code Just. 9.9.31. See also D. Bailey, Homosexuality in the Western Christian Tradition 70-81 (1975). During the English Reformation when powers of the ecclesiastical courts were transferred to the King's Courts, the first English statute criminalizing sodomy was passed. 25 Hen. VIII, c. 6. Blackstone described "the infamous crime against nature" as an offense of "deeper malignity" than rape, an heinous act "the very mention of which is a disgrace to human nature," and "a crime not fit to be named." Blackstone's Commentaries *215. The common law of England, including its prohibition of sodomy, became the received law of Georgia and the other Colonies. In 1816 the Georgia Legislature passed the statute at issue here, and that statute has been continuously in force in one form or another since that time. To hold that the act of homosexual sodomy is somehow protected as a fundamental right would be to cast aside millennia of moral teaching.

This is essentially not a question of personal "preferences" but rather of the legislative authority of the State. I find nothing in the Constitution depriving a State of the power to enact the statute challenged here.

APPEALS COURT REQUIRES OVERSIGHT OF CIA

In a decision with mixed results, the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington, D.C. has ruled that the CIA has the burden to prove that the firing of a gay undercover employee, if pursuant to a policy of barring all gays from CIA employment, was "necessary or advisable in the interests of the United States."

The Court of Appeals rejected the CIA's claim that it had the absolute discretion to fire employees for security reasons without any review by the courts. But the Court also found that the judgment of the CIA director was entitled to "great deference" because of the "sensitive nature of (his) decisions...concerning removal of employees." The appeals court ordered the case remanded to the trial court for determination of exactly why the man was fired.

The plaintiff informed the CIA that he was gay in 1982. He filed suit, represented by the ACLU National Security Project, after the CIA first conducted a three-month investigation procedure and then fired him. In a novel twist, he used the pseudonym John Doe for the lawsuit, not because of his homosexuality, but because of his undercover status.

During the inquiry, Doe was examined for 10 hours by a CIA polygraph officer who later reported that he had answered all questions truthfully. The answers included statements that he had not had sexual relations with any foreign nationals and had not disclosed classified information to any sexual partners.

At one point prior to the firing, a CIA lawyer stated that homosexuality did not inevitably lead to firing. But the agency provided no explanation for why it terminated Doe's employment two months later, other than that it was "necessary and advisable." The agency also said that, although it would give Doe a positive job recommendation, it would also inform prospective employers that he presented a security risk "because of his homosexuality."

"Nearly all other civilian federal government employees are protected by civil service regulations from adverse action based on sexual orientation," said Nan D. Hunter, director of ACLU's Lesbian and Gay Rights Project. "The CIA is exempted from those regulations because of the nature of its work."

"The irrationality of the CIA policy is evident. They assume gays are security risks, but they don't interrogate and then fire every employee who has sex outside of marriage," she said. "Yet, considering the history of witch hunting in the agencies linked most closely to national security, even this degree of protection for individual rights is a step forward."

Dissenting from the appeals court decision was Judge James Buckley, former senator from New York, who concluded that the laws did preclude judicial review of the CIA's decisions to fire its employees.

Judge Buckley also dissented from the holding that the constitutionality of an across-the-board policy barring gays from CIA positions was open to question. "I cannot agree," he wrote, "that an intelligence agency is even arguably precluded from adopting a policy banning the employment of members of any class which the Director might deem to be more susceptible to blackmail than the average."

EVANGELICAL WOMEN'S CAUCUS BACKS CIVIL RIGHTS FOR HOMOSEXUALS

FRESNO, Calif. (RNS) -- The 12-year-old Evangelical Women's Caucus International has acknowledged its lesbian minority by taking a firm stand in favor of gay rights.

Ann Eggenbroten of Costa Mesa, Calif., who wrote and introduced the resolution, said later, "We have not said that theologically homosexual behavior is OK with God. We took a stand on civil rights."

Ms. Eggebroten, a founding member of the caucus, estimated that between 20 and 30 of its 650 members are lesbian. She said these members "feel very rejected by the group and all of the evangelical Christianity." By passing the resolution, she said, "we are just acknowledging that they are there and we are not going to kick them out or not have them as speakers."

The resolution said, "Whereas homosexual people are children of God and because of the biblical mandate of Jesus Christ that we are all created equal in God's sight, and in recognition of the presence of the lesbian minority in Evangelical Women's Caucus International, EWCI takes a firm stand in favor of civil rights protection for homosexual persons."

The resolution was passed by a vote of 80-16 with 23 abstentions after about two hours of debate. "Our primary purpose is still the same, but many people felt that Christ calls us to speak out for justice," said Britt Vanden Eykel of Glendale, Calif., the caucus' national coordinator. "We've been operating out of fear for a number of years and decided it's time to confront that fear."

Ms. Vanden Eykel said a good deal of time at the group's July 6-10 meeting was devoted to studying the Bible to decide whether "it was God's will for us to take a stand or whether we were threatening the unity of the organization." She said some caucus members were concerned that "the evangelical church might presume more from the resolution than it actually says."

The gay-rights statement was passed after delegates approved less controversial resolutions condemning bias against black women and violence against women in the home. Conference workshops focused on such topics as non-sexist names for God, the impact of pornography on the image of women, church history and Bible study.

While adhering to the evangelical belief that the Bible is the inspired, infallible guide for Christian faith and life, the caucus also maintains in its literature that "the Bible, when properly understood, supports the fundamental equality of the sexes." Its founding statement asserts that "the church especially has encouraged men to prideful domination and women to irresponsible passivity."

NEWS & VIEWS FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS

UNITED METHODIST COMMISSION ON THE STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN TO SHARE HOMOPHOBIA STUDY WITH OTHER CHURCH AGENCIES

TECHNY, Ill. (UMNS) -- Following up its homophobia study, the Commission on the Status and Role of Women has agreed to share the study design with other agencies of the United Methodist Church.

At its semi-annual meeting here the commission decided to perfect a description of what was done at last February's meeting. The description will be circulated to other national church agencies, which will be asked to make their own studies and to report to the commission on how the model worked.

After considerable discussion, it was agreed that the design team for the educational study on "Linkages of Sexism and Homophobia" would prepare a bare-bones model devoid of subjective comments.

The commission's coordinating (executive) committee will circulate it to other national church agencies.

One commissioner, Charles Lamar of Owensboro, Ky., "stood outside" the group consensus.

The one-day study involved a theological presentation; small-group discussion; mime; a panel consisting of lesbians, a gay and parents of gays and "fishbowls" in which volunteers shared their learnings.

During the study, the term HETEROSEXISM was introduced in a taped lecture by Virginia Mollenkott, teacher at William Paterson College in Wayne, N.J. The term is already being used in place of homophobia in commission discussions. Ms. Mollenkott defined heterosexism as a set of assumptions that empower heterosexual persons, especially heterosexual white males, and exclude openly homosexual persons from social, religious and political power.

The Monitoring and Research Work Unit reported teams had visited the Claremont (Calif.) School of Theology and Duke Divinity School, Durham, N.C., as well as the Board of Discipleship, to ensure that women, including racial-ethnic minority women, participate in decision-making, and that fair employment practices and grievance procedures are used. Additional visits are planned.

CALIFORNIA'S CATHOLIC BISHOPS DENOUNCE AIDS PROPOSAL

NEW YORK (RNS) -- California's 20 Catholic bishops have denounced a proposition on the state ballot to place strict controls on AIDS victims as "an irrational, inappropriate and misguided approach to a serious public health problem."

They said the "assumption of Proposition 64 that AIDS is highly contagious and that people are at risk by casual contact with an infected person simply flies in the face of the medical evidence." In addition, the bishops said, several California health groups "believe that the fear generated by Proposition 64 could undermine years of research and seriously hurt their ability to treat and find a cure for AIDS."

Noting that "there is no test readily available to determine who are carriers of the AIDS virus," the bishops warned that "the equivocal language of the initiative does not preclude interpretations which would remove even suspected carriers from their jobs or from schools. Doctors, counselors and pastors could be required to report persons merely suspected of carrying the AIDS virus."

According to the Catholic bishops, the resulting fear of being reported "would drive AIDS underground" and "could actually prolong the spread of this terrible disease."

The bishops declared that the ballot initiative "threatens the civil rights of all persons in this state as well as the mutual trust and respect which characterize life in a civilized and humane society."

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS OPPOSE AIDS DISCRIMINATION...
Announce Equal Insurance Coverage For Gay Minister's Spouses

(ROCHESTER, N.Y.) -- A ruling by the Justice Department permitting employers to fire or decline to hire employees who have AIDS just because the employer fears the spread of AIDS -- whether or not the fear is rational -- met with an immediate denunciation from the Unitarian Universalist Association.

At its annual General Assembly in Rochester, N.Y., the liberal religious denomination voted 1,357 — 1 to direct its administration and urge its member churches actively to oppose the policy and to work to insure the civil rights of persons with AIDS or who test positive to HTLV-III/LAV/HIV antibodies. The resolution was drafted in late-night meetings by the denomination's Unitarian Universalist Lesbian and Gay Caucus when news of the Justice Department's action reached the Assembly, according to the Reverend Dr. Jay Deacon of the Unitarian Church of Bangor, Maine.

In addition, it was announced that the health insurance plan for Unitarian Universalist ministers would begin to provide coverage for spouses of gay and lesbian ministers just as it does for the spouses of heterosexual ministers.

CATHOLIC PRIEST FIRED FROM NEWMAN CENTER JOB AFTER ARTICLE ON GAYS

ST. CLOUD, Minn. (RNS) -- A storm of controversy that followed publication of an article by a priest in a Catholic newspaper on how the church should minister to homosexuals has culminated in the firing of the priest whose work included pastoral ministry to gays.

Bishop H. Speltz of the St. Cloud Diocese dismissed the Reverend William Dorn Jr., from his position at Christ Church Newman Center at St. Cloud State University because of his "strong disagreement with the Catholic Church's teaching on homosexuality."

Father Dorn, 34, a priest of the Crookston, Minn., Diocese, blamed his dismissal on "angry conservative reaction to what I wrote." He said he had been assured by his bishop, Victor H. Balke, that "I remain a priest in good standing with the Diocese of Crookston."

The priest's views on homosexuality were solicited by the St. Cloud Visitor, newspaper of the diocese, for an opinion page symposium on the topic. "How should the church minister to homosexuals?" It was published Sept. 18.

"We have a responsibility to develop a theology of sexuality that sees sexuality as a blessing and understands homosexuality to be part of the gift," Father Dorn wrote. "We need to develop a spirituality that trusts and embraces the embodied experience of homosexual people."

"Lesbians and gay men need to be equal partners with the rest of the church in that dialogue. The church cannot do it for them. They don't need to be patronized or pitied or rejected. They need to be accepted as equal disciples in the journey of faith."

"No church ministry will succeed as long as it continues to insist that homosexual orientation, unlike heterosexual orientation, can be totally and universally separated from lifestyle. The Vatican's own Declaration of Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics (1978) acknowledges the futility of such a division between sexuality and person."

"The church needs to recognize that its condemnation of homosexuality is based on a questionable use of uncertain scripture passages (a method it would not tolerate in any other circumstances) and on a slavish adherence to an overly biological understanding of natural law. In addition, the church needs to cherish the civil rights of homosexual people. The right to housing and work is essential to human dignity."

In explaining his dismissal of the priest, Bishop Speltz said public statements made by Father Dorn had brought him many letters, telephone calls and other complaints from people who understood them to be "clearly in disagreement with the church, and they are deeply disturbed by this."

The homosexuality issue, the bishop noted, is "very sensitive, much discussed these days, and one about which Catholics and others have become confused."

"In conscience," he added, "I cannot permit Father Dorn to continue his teaching as one of our important Catholic parishes and centers of learning."

Bishop Speltz expressed gratitude for the work Father Dorn had done as assistant pastor since September 1984.

He said he had offered the priest financial help equal to one-half of what his salary would be for October to May. He said he also hoped he would find a way of using his "fine talents for the church and for people."

The symposium in the St. Cloud Visitor also included an article on the same page by a Benedictine nun, Sister Emma Eskelson, a chemical dependency counselor at St. Cloud Hospital. She wrote that "personal sexuality orientation, whether that be heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual, is a gift from a loving creator. It needs to be affirmed as such and integrated holistically into one's faith life."

"Homosexuality, finding one's psychological, affectional, emotional and physical affinity with persons of the same sex, is using one's sexuality not for procreation but for creative energy."

In a statement in the Sept. 25 issue of the St. Cloud Visitor, Bishop Speltz wrote that the positions expressed in the articles by the priest and nun "contradict the clear and definitive teaching of the Catholic Church."

"That teaching, simply stated, is that genital sexual activity between members of the same sex is objectively sinful," the bishop wrote. He added that "the church is equally clear when it declares that while the sin is to be condemned, the sinner is to be loved. There must always be compassion and concern for those who violate God's law, whatever the law may be."

In his Oct. 6 statement announcing the dismissal, the bishop said Father Dorn's public statements included not only the Sept. 18 article but also statements published In April and May 1985 in the St. Cloud State University Chronicle.

Bishop Speltz said his action does not mean there should be no ministry at the Newman Center to homosexual persons. "Rather," he said, "it is to insist that this ministry be carried out in keeping with the church's teaching, as it is being done successfully elsewhere."

Journey Editor's note: *Since the above story did not tell what happened with Sister Emma Eskelson as a result of her article in the St. Cloud Visitor we called her to find out more about her story. Sister Eskelson tells us that she went through what she described as a "month of agony." She says that the story was shown to a church lawyer and to a theologian and it was determined that there was nothing in it that violates church policy. She said that since she made no mention of genital activity her comments were in keeping with church teaching. She has, she says, received very positive comments from numerous persons in the Benedictine order to which she belongs. She affirmed her strong belief in the things that she wrote in the St. Cloud Visitor and her determination to stand up for her beliefs apparently remains unshaken.*

FIRED PRIEST ADMITS HOMOSEXUALITY... PAST GAY-RELATED INCIDENT

by Willmar Thorkelson, Religious News Service

ST. CLOUD, Minn. (RNS) -- A priest fired from his Newman Center job here for his public views on homosexuality has confirmed that he was fired from a similar position in Florida four years earlier following a gay-related incident.

After confirming the Florida incident, the Reverend William Dorn Jr. told a St. Paul newspaper that he is gay and that he has carefully hidden his homosexuality for fear of ruining his religious career.

Father Dorn, 34, was dismissed recently from his position at Christ Church Newman Center by Bishop George H. Speltz, head of the St. Cloud Diocese, after he had written an article for the diocesan newspaper critical of the Catholic Church's teachings on homosexuality.

Subsequently, reports about Father Dorn's Florida history were given to reporters and to St. Cloud diocesan officials by Steve Winzenberg, a University of Wisconsin-River Falls broadcast journalism teacher who worked with the priest in 1982 at the Newman Center at Florida Southern College, a United Methodist school in Lakeland, Florida.

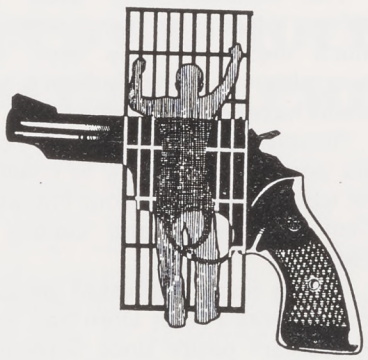
"As readers and as Catholics, we deserve to have the whole story," Mr. Winzenberg said after reading news accounts of Father Dorn's dismissal. The priest's background "explains a little more the motivation" behind his statements and "helps people make a better judgment," Mr. Winzenberg said.

Father Dorn said he was fired as the first director of the Newman Center at Florida Southern College after a newspaper reported that he had been abducted in the parking lot of a gay bar in Tampa. The newspaper also reported that Father Dorn initially lied to police about the abduction to hide the fact that he had visited a gay district.

On Oct. 26, the Reverend Nicholas Dressen, pastor of Christ Church Newman Center at St. Cloud State University with Father Dorn, read a statement at Masses alerting parishioners to coming press disclosures about Father Dorn's past.

Kidnapped Outside Gay Bar

"Four years ago, while working in a campus ministry in Florida, Father Bill was kidnapped at gunpoint while getting into his car outside a gay bar in Tampa, Florida," the statement said. "He was bound and gagged and left in a swamp. When he got lose, and the police were notified, he lied about where the kidnapping had occurred in order to protect himself from public embarrassment and loss of job.



"He later told police where the kidnapping had occurred, and the police gave that story to the local newspapers. A private citizen has alerted the news media of that past history and after two weeks of trying to keep the story out of the papers Father Bill has decided to tell the story in the hope he can be finished with it once and for all."

"Before Father Bill accepted a position on our pastoral staff, he told Father Nick of the kidnapping so that nothing was hidden. As Father Bill became more involved in the lesbian and gay community here, we knew what the possibility of this story becoming knowledge grew."

"He chose to risk that rather than avoid a ministry he believed needed to be carried out."

The next day, Oct. 27, the St. Paul Pioneer Press Dispatch carried a long front-page copyrighted article, headlined "Fired priest goes public and says he's gay."

In the article, written by Jacqui Banaszynski, Father Dorn was quoted as saying that he knew from his earliest childhood that he wanted to be a priest and that he was gay. After being ordained by his home diocese of Crookston, Minn., he "got high marks at his first several job assignments, becoming one of the church's rising young stars," the article said.

But after the Florida incident and his firing by the bishop of the Orlando Diocese, Father Dorn said he was "dragged out of the closet on the front page of the newspaper." He no longer hid his homosexuality from his family, close friends and supervisors, but was not public about it.

"I didn't make a public statement about being gay," he told the St. Paul paper, "As a publicly gay priest, I would never have gotten a job."

Fears Vatican Investigation

In telling the newspaper that he is gay, Father Dorn observed: "All martyrs are unwilling. I guess I'm being thrown into the volcano." He laughingly said he was "trying to get out of town in time."

But he expressed concern that his candor may carry a price -- that he may be subject of a Vatican investigation that could lead to his ouster from the priesthood.

Father Dorn said he was not surprised about the story of his Florida firing reaching Minnesota. In addition to expressing his views publicly on homosexuality, he has been an adviser for a St. Cloud campus lesbian and gay support group, and has been active in working with AIDS patients.

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GAINS REPORTED IN FOSTER CARE STRUGGLE IN BOSTON

An Episcopal priest in South Boston has won the latest round in her court battle challenging the foster care regulations of the State of Massachusetts. The Reverend Kathryn Piccard is one of the plaintiffs in a law suit challenging the constitutionality of the regulations. The Reverend Piccard, of St. Matthew and the Redeemer Episcopal Church, lost a six year foster care placement when she listed her sexual orientation as "private."

In a move that clears the way for the case to go to trial Chief Justice Thomas Morse of the Massachusetts Superior Court denied a state motion to have the law suit dismissed.

In his sharply-worded opinion the Chief Justice observed that the court had found solid legal basis for the plaintiff's claim that the regulations were, on their face, "wholly arbitrary and capricious and adverse to the needs of children." The Chief Justice emphatically asserted that the "parents sexual orientation has no detrimental impact on children."

Also filing as plaintiffs in the suit were Donald Babets and David Jean. In May 1985 the State Department of Social Services removed two

foster children from their home citing the regulations. Under the regulations, foster care placements with single people require special approval and will be considered only if there are no married couples available. For practical purposes this policy means no foster children in gay/lesbian homes.

Chief Justice Morse also upheld the plaintiff's claim that the regulations "invidiously discriminate against homosexuals," as applied in the case of Babets and Jean. "Any exclusion of [gays and lesbians] from consideration as foster parents, all things being equal, is blanantly irrational," said Morse in his opinion. Moreover, he declared that a "bare desire to harm a politically unpopular group" is not a legitimate state objective.

The court's ruling settles some of the legal issues surrounding the case on terms quite favorable to the plaintiffs. The plaintiffs are seeking to prove that discrimination against gays and lesbians in making foster care placements reflects nothing more than an unconstitutional effort to harm a politically unpopular group.

[Information for the preceeding story comes from The Guide to Gay New England and is used by Journey by permission of the Publisher, the Reverend Edward Hougen.]

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FIRED PRIEST

"I knew I was risking guilt by association, but decided I can't live with that fear," the priest said.

Even so, if he had known he was jeopardizing his career and that his personal life was going to be catapulted into newspaper headlines, he would not have written the article in the St. Cloud diocesan newspaper that got him fired, he said.

"I'm not that courageous or that foolish," he said. "But it's a story that needs to be told."

Father Dorn said he had decided to talk about his own homosexuality for three reasons:

-- "First, healing ministry happens when people are in touch with their own brokenness and struggle We all have secrets, something in our lives that is the source of the brokenness. The gospel keeps saying power comes from being vulnerable."

-- "Second, lesbian and gay people need to be able to talk about who we are, and all of us need to be able to talk about our sexuality. If we repress our sexuality, then we can't get close to anybody because we don't know what's going to happen."

-- "And third, my experience matters because it's not unique. That experience of violence, whether it's physical violence or emotional violence or the violence of having to worry about your job or places to live, that's lived by hundreds of thousands of gay people in this country all the time."

Besides possible dismissal from the priesthood, Father Dorn said he also worries he will be discredited by a homophobic society, and as a result the homosexuals and other disenfranchised members of the church will suffer, the St. Paul paper said.

"I suppose some people will just write me off, say I'm just another flake or gay person blowing my horn," he said. "But I come to count being gay as a gift, because I know what it means to be oppressed and to be outside and to be excluded. I think that my compassion for people who are down and out comes from understanding what that means."

Meanwhile Bishop Speltz said he had a "general knowledge that Father Dorn ran into some difficulty in Florida." But, he said, he did not have details on what happened and did not care to inquire.

"My concern was with the teaching and the influence it would have on his counseling," the bishop said. "I did not want to bring personalities into it."

Dignity Leader: NUMBER OF GAY CLERGY AND NUNS IS SECRET

by Virginia Culver, Special to Religious News Service

DENVER (RNS) -- The "great unspoken secret" of the Roman Catholic Church is the number of nuns, priests and bishops who are homosexuals, says the leader of a gay Catholic group.

James Bussen, president of Dignity, a national organization for gay Catholics, estimates that the number of homosexuals may be as high as 50 percent in all three categories of Catholic church professionals, though the percentage of gays in the general population is estimated at only 10 percent.

Mr. Bussen said that despite the high percentage of gays among the religious, "the church refuses to deal with the matter, or with sexuality."

Mr. Bussen, a Chicago management analyst, said that during the 1950's when the religious orders were at their peak, many of those entering were people of homosexual orientation, if not practice.

Homosexual practice is considered a sin by the Catholic Church, and Dignity members feel unwelcome in many congregations if they openly acknowledge their orientation, even though the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, to which all the nation's Catholic bishops belong, has stated that gays should not suffer from prejudice against their basic human rights.

"They have a right to respect, friendship and justice. They should have an active role in the Christian community," a 1976 bishops' statement says.

Nonetheless, many bishops have fought against the passage of gay rights bills in their own cities, and many refuse to allow homosexuals to have their own worship services in church buildings. Mr. Bussen said the bishops' statement about gays isn't followed by most bishops. "Such doublespeak is infuriating and frustrating for gays," he said.

But Mr. Bussen said about half the 100 Dignity chapters around the country, which have a total of 5,000 members, do have weekly or monthly Masses in Catholic churches, "and many bishops just look the other way."

Mr. Bussen spoke to the Denver chapter of Dignity at its regular meeting place, the Capitol Heights Presbyterian Church. A Catholic congregation called the "10:30 Catholic Community" meets regularly at the same church.

Mr. Bussen believes the Catholic Church has an "abysmal" record of dealing with sexuality, and noted that many American Catholics are ignoring church rules about birth control and abortion, as well as homosexuality.

"The church cannot continue to beat us to death with rules that people aren't listening to," he said. "Sometimes the church has to listen to the people, not just the bishops."

He is hopeful that the church will change its stance on homosexuality as it has on other issues. "After all, the church was for slavery at one time and against allowing women to vote," he said.

VATICAN NEWSPAPER CITES BISHOP VEGA'S STORY OF HIS EXPULSION

by Philip Willan, Religious News Service

VATICAN CITY (RNS) -- The Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano has published part of a 29-page document written by Bishop Pablo Antonio Vega, the vice-president of the Nicaraguan bishops' conference who was expelled from Nicaragua July 4.

The lengthy article, published Aug. 29, was devoted to the conflict between church and state in Nicaragua. Its publication in L'Osservatore served to dispel speculation that the Vatican wanted to distance itself from Bishop Vega's virulent condemnation of the Sandinista regime.

The article opened by quoting from messages of solidarity with the Nicaraguan church from the bishops' conferences of Papua New Guinea, El Salvador and Ecuador.

The message from the Salvadoran bishops condemned the work of "confusion and division that the regime carries out through the so-called popular church, which is totally subservient to the regime and in open opposition to the legitimate pastors."

The L'Osservatore article went on to quote from Bishop Vega's document, a letter to his fellow Nicaraguan bishops, analyzing the political situation in Nicaragua and describing the circumstances of his expulsion.

It described how he was arrested and escorted to the Honduran border without even being allowed to pack a suitcase.

"The Nicaraguan people has a Christian identity and its own historical identity," Bishop Vega wrote. "You cannot impose on it by force and by deceit a materialistic structure that ignores this identity."

Bishop Vega also described how the Sandinista literacy campaign lost the support of the church because it was used to promote "materialistic indoctrination and class hatred."

The article refers to three murders of religious activists in Bishop Vega's Juigalpa diocese. "Under the previous regime if someone was tortured or threatened by the civil guard they asked me to denounce the fact," he said. "Today, on the contrary, after telling me of torture and threats they ask me to consider it as a secret of the confessional, for the safety of themselves and of their families."

Bishop Vega concluded that the Sandinista revolution had lost the good will and support of the Nicaraguan church because of its rigid ideology and the influence of external forces.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY STATUTE DEREGULATED RELIGION MARKET

by William Bole, Religious News Service

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (RNS) -- Groups such as Americans United for Separation of Church and State are making new efforts to acquaint young Americans with the views of such American founders as Thomas Jefferson, whose Virginia Statute on Religious Liberty, passed after 10 years of sharp debate and political maneuvering, influenced similar laws in other states as well as the First Amendment's religion clauses.

At a time when most of the states either sponsored particular denominations or required certain religious beliefs and practices, the Virginia Statute prohibited compulsory church attendance, religious tests for public office and all taxation for religious purposes, and extended the full rights of citizenship to all believers as well as atheists.

Although attacked during his time as anti-religious, the statute reflected Jefferson's own sense that his design for church-state relations was in keeping with the will of God. The document began with Jefferson's famous words, "Well aware that Almight God hath created the mind free."

It asserted, further, that all attempts to influence the mind through coercion "tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the Holy Author of our religion, who being Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was his Almighty power to do." Introducing what would become a guiding American concept, Jefferson also asserted that civil rights "have no dependence on religious opinions, more that our opinions in physics and geometry."

Reflecting Jefferson's concern about perserving the integrity of religion, the statute asserted that church-state entanglement "tends also to corrupt the principles of that very religion it is intended to encourage, by bribing, with a monopoly of worldly honors and emoluments, those who will externally profess and conform to it; that though indeed these are criminal who do not withstand such temptation, yet neither are those innocent who lay the bait in their way."

This law and others inspired by it led to what religious-studies scholar William Lee Miller described at a recent conference on the statue as the "deregulation of the religion market." Unshackled by laws, he said, formerly dissenting religious groups such as the Methodists and Baptists began to bring the gospel to the far reaches of the new nation, surpassing in numbers the more staid Anglicans, Congregationalists and Presbyterians.

To make sure his work would not become undone, Jefferson inserted into his statute a legally dubious provision -- that any attempts to alter or repeal it would infringe on the "natural rights" of citizens. While critics of Jefferson failed to gain ground in early America, modern-day opponents of strict separation are making gains, according to speakers at the conference.

"If you think things are getting better, think again," lamented Albert Menendez, a church-state expert who reflected the largely pessimistic tone of the gathering here.

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST SPEAKS OUT AGAINST SODOMY LAWS

(Cambridge, Mass.) -- Delegates to the Sixth National Gathering of the United Church Coalition for Lesbian/Gay Concerns (UCCL/GC) have adopted a resolution urging the United Church of Christ to refuse to hold national meetings in states which have laws prohibiting "sodomy."

UCCL/GC is an officially recognized special interest group within the United Church of Christ (UCC) committed to ministry with and justice for lesbians and gay men, their families and friends.

The resolution passed by the delegates reads, in part, "UCCL/GC calls upon the General Synod, the Executive Council of the UCC, all of the Boards and Instrumentalities of the UCC henceforth, to support full human freedoms for all of the members of UCC and witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, by refusing to hold any national or regional meetings in those states which retain "sodomy" laws.

General Synod, the UCC national assembly, meets every two years. The next three General Synods are scheduled for Ohio, Texas and Virginia.

UNITED METHODISTS TO SAMPLE PSALMS FROM BIBLE VERSION REVISION

PRINCETON, N.J. (UMNS)--United Methodists will be the first to sample a liturgical setting of Old Testament Psalms based on an in-process revision of a version of the Bible when the Hymnal Revision Committee tests psalms and responses with 170 local churches this fall.

Meeting Sept. 6-7, the subcommittee developing a liturgical psalter for the new United Methodist hymnal reported that their work, based on the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) was ready for a test run in local churches. The subcommittee is in the process of developing a psalter with both responsive reading and brief sung responses. The purpose, they said, is to foster more understanding about and use of the psalms in worship. They plan to test their suggestions this fall by sending packets to local churches, to be selected according to geography, density of United Methodists, racial-ethnic groups and adventurous worship leaders. Each church will receive a packet of psalms to be read responsively, with responses set to music, for four Sundays during worship services and will evaluate how they fit into the service.

Responsive readings are old hat for most United Methodists, but the one-line responses set to music--called "antiphons"--are a relatively new phenomenon that the psalter subcommittee hopes will catch on.

"In Christian tradition, psalms were among the earliest, most compact worship devices," said the Reverend Carlton R. Young, hymnal editor. "We need to recapture some of that history in our local church."

Language--whether regarding gender, race, physical condition--is the common challenge facing all subgroups of the 25-member Hymnal Revision Committee, and the psalter committee is no exception.

The subgroup--with three Old Testament scholars as advisors and the blessing of the New Revised Standard Version Committee--is poring over the proposed NRSV texts, reviewing the original Hebrew documents and making the forms of address more generic where possible. The first RSV was produced in 1946.

The New Revised Standard Version--due out by 1990--is being handled by a 30-member committee including representatives of major Protestant denominations, plus five Roman Catholic, one Eastern Orthodox and one Jewish scholar. The committee, working under the auspices of the National Council of Churches, is chaired by the Reverend Bruce M. Metzger, retired professor of Princeton Seminary. Dr. Metzger was editor of the 1946 RSV, done by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches. The committee early on gave the United Methodist hymnal revision group permission to use the NRSV version of the psalms as the basis for a liturgical psalter. Dr. Metzger told United Methodist New Service the latest revision of the Bible is prompted by recent discoveries of ancient Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, and more expansive studies by scholars.

Another influencing factor is the constantly changing English language, Dr. Metzger said. The changes can be as common as changing antiquated "thee" and "thy" to "you" and "your," or as delicate and somehow controversial as exchanging masculine forms of address for more generic, inclusive ones. "People are becoming more alert to the 'over-masculinization,' and scholars are finding that earlier translations used masculine forms when in doubt, many times erroneously."

For example, he said, the King James Version of Revelation 3:20, reads *"if any man hears My voice."* However, Dr. Metzger said the original Greek word is "one" not "man." Not to point the finger just at King James, Dr. Metzger said the Revised Standard Version "overlooked a lot of those words, too. We're trying to play catch-up [in the new version]."

Members of the United Methodist psalter committee have adopted their own set of guidelines about language, and in some instances have gone a little further than the NRSV committee in terms of language. For example, compare the treatments of Psalm 8:4:

* *"What is man that thou are mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?"* (1946 RSV);
* *"What is a human being that you are mindful of him and a mortal that you care for him?"* (New RSV);
* *"What are human beings that you are mindful of them, and mortals that you care for them?"* (United Methodist psalter committee).

"We're referring to the ancient manuscripts and, where the Hebrew and Greek allow, we're making forms of address inclusive," said Dr. Young. "As with the hymns, we're doing as much as we can with integrity to see that language about people includes everyone." Also as with the hymns, he said, traditional forms of address about the diety will be virtually unchanged. In a few instances, pronouns have been changed to proper names to avoid "unnecessary" references to gender. In Psalm 24:2, *"For he has founded it upon the seas"* (RSV, NRSV) was changed by the United Methodist group to *"For God has founded it upon the seas."*

"The Old Testament--at least the psalms--reflect the Hebrew understanding that God has no gender," Dr. Young said. However, "Lord," "Father" and "King" still are retained as acceptable metaphors for God.

Dr. Metzger, who sat in for part of the Sept. 6 meeting, said he found no quarrel with the United Methodist work, and will relate the hymnal committee's treatment of the psalms to his group. "We are very much interested in what the [hymnal] committee is doing," he said.

All recommendations by the psalter subcommittee will be considered by the entire Hymnal Revision Committee this fall, Dr. Young said. Decisions by the larger committee are subject to approval by the 1988 General Conference, the denomination's highest governing body.

NEWS & VIEWS FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS

CARDINAL BERNARDIN DENOUNCES DISCRIMINATION AGAINST AIDS VICTIMS

by William Bole, Religious News Service

NEW YORK (RNS) -- Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago, whose intervention was instrumental in the recent defeat of a gay-rights initiative before the City Council there, has issued a pastoral letter denouncing discrimination against those with the deadly disease AIDS.

The prelate called for a "compassionate, not vengeful" response to the crisis in announcing a new ministry to AIDS victims, most of whom are homosexuals, by the nation's second largest archdiocese.

"Now is the time for all of us to put aside whatever alienation or fear or prejudice we may have" and respond "to the challenge that AIDS presents to our community today," said the 12-page statement, which was read in Catholic parishes throughout Chicago on Oct. 26.

The statement instructed archdioceasan agencies to set an example by treating employees who fall victim to the disease as they would any others "with life-threatening illnesses." He said the archdiocese will begin training priests, nuns, brothers and lay leaders for ministries to those with the disease.

There will be education about AIDS in church schools and religious education programs, Cardinal Bernardin said. He added he will appoint a pastoral chief of AIDS ministries to coordinate and encourage activities in the archdiocese.

Cardinal Bernardin, one of the nation's most influential Catholic prelates, recently leveled sharp attacks on legislation that would have amended Chicago's civil-rights laws to include sexual orientation. His intervention is widely believed to have played a major role in the bill's defeat last summer.

In his new pastoral statement, Cardinal Bernardin acknowledged that the church's teaching on homosexuality has contributed to prejudice against homosexuals and those with AIDS.

"Unfortunately, in our efforts to teach the wrongness of homosexual acts, at times all that has been heard is the sound of condemnation and rejection," the prelate said.

"What is missed, then, what is not heard, is the church's teaching that people with a homosexual orientation, like everyone else, are created in God's image and possess a human dignity which must be respected and protected," he added.

Cardinal Bernardin rejected the labeling of AIDS as "divine punishment" for homosexuality. For one thing, he said, homosexuals are not the only victims of AIDS.

"Second, God is loving and compassionate, not vengeful," he wrote. "Third, the Gospel reveals that, while Jesus did not hesitate to proclaim a radical ethic of life, he never ceased to reach out to the lowly, to the outcasts of his time -- even if they did not live up to the full demands of his teaching."

Gay leaders in Chicago who have in the past criticized Cardinal Bernardin's stands on gay rights gave the prelate rare praise in response to his new initiative.

"He recognizes the key, very important fact that AIDS is not a gay disease, a gay problem," said Richard Taylor of the Chicago chapter of Dignity, a national Catholic gay caucus. "His leadership will go a long way in addressing the problem within the Catholic Church and non-Catholic communities."

FAVORABLE RULING BY CHURCH COURT NOT SURPRISING, SAYS GAY CLERIC

NEW YORK (RNS) -- A gay Colorado minister who has won another round in his battle to stay in the United Methodist ministry said he is not surprised by the most recent ruling in this case by the church's highest court.

"I guess this settles the case until 1988, when the Methodist Church recreates creation," said the Reverend Julian Rush, 50, associate pastor of St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Denver and director of the Colorado AIDS Project, referring to the church's quadrennial legislative meeting, which has debated the issue of homosexuals in the ministry for almost two decades.

According to the ruling issued Oct. 24 by the church's Judicial Council, the make-up of an investigative committee that ruled in Mr. Rush's case last spring did not violate church law. The seven-member committee had ruled that there was insufficient evidence to put Mr. Rush on church trial under regulations barring "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" from ministry and declaring homosexual practice to be incompatible with Christian teaching.

Denver Bishop Roy Sano had appointed the committee, whose makeup was challenged by conservative ministers who said two committee members had conflicts of interest because they had served on other agencies which dealt with the Rush case. Because of the protests, Bishop Sano, who ruled that the committee was duly constituted, asked the Judicial Council to issue an opinion on his judgment.

Saying the council's ruling did not surprise him, Mr. Rush commented, "Bishop Sano is so careful and thorough I knew he had a tight case." The Denver pastor has been battling to remain in the ordained ministry for five years, since he made public his homosexuality in 1981.

Bishop Sano was out of town and unavailable for comment.

A church official who asked not to be identified said, "It would be surprising if some further attempt" to remove Mr. Rush from ministry were not made by conservatives in the church who have repeatedly opposed the homosexual clergyman's reappointment to ministerial assignments.

The Judicial Council's ruling came after several hours of debate. The council had considered portions of the Rush case twice before. In the latest opinion, the council said its ruling concerned only the procedure in the committee selection, not the merits of the case.

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IN GOD'S IMAGE

Women's struggle for their rights is a creation process, a means to become people created in the image of God on an equal basis with men. Similarly, the history of gay people is an example of a creation process and a struggle for human rights. In the "Torch Song Trilogy," Arnhold says that "anybody who do not want to give me respect, do not have any place in my life." The long fight for "new human," the one truly created others is part of an ongoing creation.

God continues to be the Creator. Creation is not static, it means change and growth. Moreover, we can see a creation process not through control but through love. As the Creator, God does not work through exclusion, but through inclusion. Women, blacks, gays and lesbians, we have all learned something very important: God does not work from the top, but from below, from the outside and the underside of society.

I believe in Jesus Christ.

Was Jesus homosexual? We don't know, and it is not really important. But it is not irrelevant or blasphemous to raise the question, although it cannot be answered. We believe that Jesus was a truly human being, and as such he was also a sexual being. However, the sources do not focus upon his sexuality, and probably he was so immersed in his life as a prophet that sexuality did not play an important or independent role in his life.

In our Christian faith, Jesus is the "new human", the one truly created in the image of God. That is stated in different ways, e.g., John's Gospel, 1:18, says that while "No one has ever seen God," it is Jesus Christ who has made God known. If we want to know who God is, we shall look to Jesus. And likewise, if we want to know whom we should be, we shall look to Jesus. We believe that Jesus can give us a better understanding of ourselves, that he can so to speak interpret our lives. What we are after is a total perspective on our lives. A possibility to grasp our life as a whole. Thus, the usual piecemeal approach is useless. How many homosexuals have not despaired of using e.g. Romans 1:26ff as a mirror for themselves? Often our religious background has taught us to ask: "What is lawful? What is forbidden? Which acts are natural and which are against nature?" Thus Bible and religion become a legal code, a vast number of "do's" and "don'ts." This is the very trademark of the Pharisaic religion as it is described by the Evangelists.

Over against this we meet a totally different perspective on the side of Jesus. A typical example is the story of the prostitute in the house of Simon, the Pharisee, in Luke 7:26-50. In this story Jesus does not only forgive her sins, i.e. her individual trespasses of Jewish sexual law. If this were the case, this would have served to emphasize the moral view of the Pharisee, in which sexual sins are especially sinful. He says to himself about Jesus: "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of a woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner" (7:39). The Pharisee has a one-dimensional view of this woman: she is nothing but a sinner. With his judgment the Pharisee establishes himself as a righteous person, who does not mix with sinners and outcasts.

Jesus puts aside this moral scale altogether by introducing a new standard which is love. He asks: who shows the more love (7:44-47). The woman is not one-dimensional. There is more to her life than sin. She is a person who shows love as a response to God's love in forgiving. Measured by this standard the Pharisee cannot any longer consider himself just. On the contrary, he is revealed as one who does not love. Thus the balance between the Pharisee and the sinful woman is upset. The whole system of morals, justice, purity, law is brought out of balance. And the very structure of society in which everybody knew his or her place, with clear distinctions between sinner and righteous, is upset.

This story is characteristic of many narratives in the Gospel. Frequently there are three important elements: 1) Jesus criticizes the leaders and their attitudes and morals. 2) Healing or forgiveness of sins are frequently combined with an emphasis of human value in the people concerned. 3) The signs of a new society and of a new humanity come from these people. They have resources that are being put to use. It was not the Pharisee, but the prostitute who was an example of love.

Thus we find in the fellowship of Jesus a creation process. Out from the shadows and underside of society come all those people who were regarded as less than "the image of God": sinners, tax collectors, lepers, bandits, shepherds, etc. Their meeting Jesus brings forth new resources and new life. They become followers, missionaries, church leaders; they create a new fellowship of people, based on equality and love. There is an enormous creative potential which becomes visible here.

We need to have more of this vision of a total view of ourselves, involved in an encounter with Jesus and one another. I shall briefly mention three areas for consideration:

It is an important aspect of Jesus' encounter with people that he considers a person in his or her totality: forgiveness is accompanied by physical healing and/or social integration in a community. There is here an urge to totality and wholeness. I see here a challenge to wholeness in our lives, to unite spirit and body, our social life and our sexual life. This is our task within the gay/lesbian community at large: to reflect upon the vision of a sexuality integrated in the totality of our lives, to refuse to let this vision go. A second aspect here is that of the breaking with role models. It was a characteristic feature of the Jesus movement that he broke with role models. It is most visible in the way in which women received a totally new status and new tasks. In Luke's gospel we even find women as models for the disciples. It is tempt-

ing to rephrase a famous saying: "Unless you become like women, you cannot enter the Kingdom of God." This was one of the major areas of conflict with the surrounding society. Jesus breaking with male role models to create a community which was more fully human -- that is a challenging thought. Can we break with our own male-dominated system of role models to become more human?

Third -- what is our potential for change? I am here thinking specifically of changes in lifestyles and relationships. That is one of the hard challenges wherewith we are confronted through AIDS: many of us will have to introduce changes in our lives. How can we see that as a challenge to our resources and to our potential for love and fellowship rather than a "no" sign? How can we see and introduce in our lives new models and new forms of relationships?

I believe in the Holy Spirit -- the communion of saints.

To be created "in the image of God" means to be created to community, to fellowship. This is basic also to the "new creation": the believers in Jesus received the Holy Spirit as the basis for the new fellowship (Romans 12, I Corinthians 12). One of the possible reasons for the rapid expansion of Christianity in the Roman empire was the breaking down of social structures. Thus there was a need for belonging, for a group which gave security and social identity. We, too, live in societies in which many human and social relations are breaking down. In what ways can we as gay people contribute to the building up of networks and relations that can keep our societies together?

This may seem a strange question. Many, both within and without the gay community will say that our relationships are characterized by lack of stability. How, then, can we be models for others? I agree that we have to work very hard on the matter of relationships, but there is another side of life in the gay and lesbian community that is worth noticing. We may be able to reintroduce to our societies the old institution of friendship. In antiquity friendship was an important institution, e.g. in Greece much more so than marriage. In the Middle Ages also we find frequent mentions of very emotional friendships among men, expressed interms that nowadays would be described as definitely homosexual. This is true even of last century; published letters between friends, men and women, have often led to the suspicion that the writers actually shared a homosexual relationship. Leaving aside the idea that a homosexual relationship is something suspicious, I think the surprise over such friendships shows a lack of awareness of the importance of close friendships in our history. One of the reasons is that they have more or less disappeared today. The change in family relations, with the rise of the nuclear family, accompanied with an ideology that this was the centre of all aspects of emotional and social life, has preempted the institution of friendship. "Friends" are frequently merely business associates and acquaintances, rather that close friends with whom one shares life. However, there seems to be a difference among gay people. It has been noticed e.g. by Michael Pollock, "Male Homosexuality - or Happiness in the Ghetto", Western Sexuality, 52, and confirmed now by a sociology thesis in progress at the University of Oslo (Arnfinn J. Andersen, "Homofile Menns Primarrelasjoner," Sosilogisk Institutt, 1986) that many gay men have a very stong network of friends. Being without or far away from a family network, many of us have developed close friendships. They actually make up a "family of friends," with whom we share life, to whom we turn for support, with whom we spend much of our spare time, together with whom we reflect on life and try to find models for our existence.

This makes me think of the first Christian groups. Many of Jesus' desciples broke away from their families, and the group which they formed became a "new" family with "brothers" and "sisters." The closeness, the support, the loyality reminded of the family. This is something which many of us have also experienced. Amidst accusations of instability, almost unnoticed even by ourselves, we are in the process of developing a very important institution. Even if we do not find "the one and only" person with whom to share the rest of our life, we need not be lonely. Besides, friendship is not a substitute for a relationship, but an independent institution - and probably a necessary one for building fruitful relationships. Moreover, here we are on to something which is important for all people. We need to talk about it, to share our experiences and to be of help to others who want to develop their potential for friendship.

To be created in the image of God is to be created to a community of friends.

To be created in the image of God is to be created to a community of friends. In John 15:15 Jesus says: "No longer do I call you servants, ---, but I have called you friends." Once more -- this is a challenge to us in our lives: to see in one another the image of God is to treat each other as friends.

My main point in this presentation has been to urge us to move on to a new phase in our communal and individual history. For many years the slogan for the Open Church group in Oslo has been a headline originally taken from the Gay News: "Our God, too." This was a necessary protest when we felt that God was taken away from us. I hope that we have now reached a mature confidence that God is our God, as well as the God of all other people, and that we are created in the image of God. It is a hard-won confidence, acquired through our struggle for human rights and for self- respect. In this process we have learned something very important about God and about ourselves. This we must share with one another, within the wider gay and lesbian community, in our churches and in our societies. This should give us plenty to do in the years to come!

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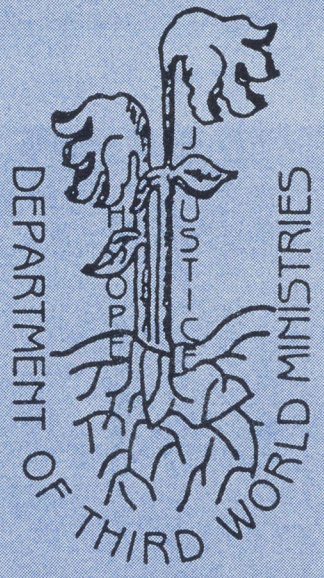

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